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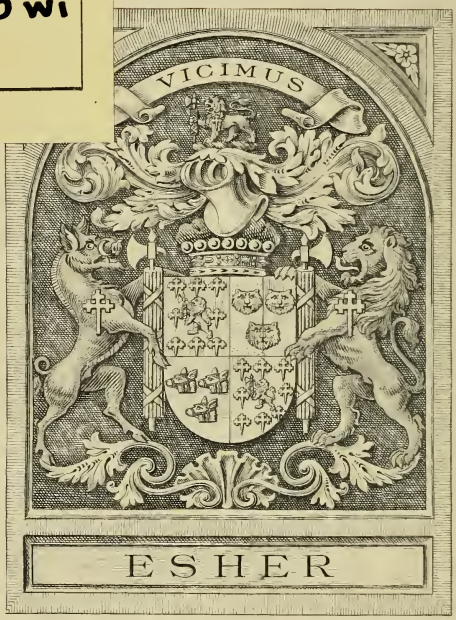

WILLING TO DIE.

VOL. I.

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WILLING TO DIE.

BY

J. SHERIDAN LE FANU,

AUTHOR OF

"UNCLE SILAS,"

&c. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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WILLING TO DIE.

TO THE READER.

FIRST, I must tell you how I intend to relate my story. Having never before undertaken to write a long narrative, I have considered and laid down a few rules which I shall observe. Some of these are unquestionably good; others, I daresay, offend against the canons of composition; but I adopt them, because they will enable me to tell my story better than, with my imperfect experience, better rules possibly would. In the first place, I shall represent the people with whom I had to deal quite fairly. I have met some bad people, some indifferent, and some who at this distance of time seem

to me like angels in the unchanging light of heaven.

My narrative shall be arranged in the order of the events; I shall not recapitulate or anticipate.

What I have learned from others, and did not witness, that which I narrate, in part, from the hints of living witnesses, and, in part, conjecturally, I shall record in the historic third person; and I shall write it down with as much confidence and particularity as if I had actually seen it; in that respect imitating, I believe, all great historians, modern and ancient. But the scenes in which I have been an actor, that which my eyes have seen, and my ears heard, I will relate accordingly. If I can be clear and true, my clumsiness and irregularity, I hope, will be forgiven me.

My name is Ethel Ware.

I am not an interesting person by any means. You shall judge. I shall be forty-

two my next birthday. That anniversary will occur on the first of May, 1873; and I am unmarried.

I don't look quite the old maid I am, they tell me. They say I don't look five-and-thirty, and I am conscious, sitting before the glass, that there is nothing sour or peevish in my features. What does it matter, even to me? I shall, of course, never marry; and, honestly, I don't care to please any one. If I cared twopence how I looked, I should probably look worse than I do.

I wish to be honest. I have looked in the glass since I wrote that sentence. I have just seen the faded picture of what may have been a pretty, at least what is called a piquant face; a forehead broad and well-formed, over which the still dark-brown hair grows low; large and rather good grey eyes and features, with nothing tragic, nothing classic—just fairly good.

I think there was always energy in my

face! I think I remember, long ago, something at times comic; at times, also, something sad and tender, and even dreamy, as I fixed flowers in my hair or talked to my image in the glass. All that has been knocked out of me pretty well. What I do see there now is resolution.

There are processes of artificial hatching in use, if I remember rightly, in Egypt, by which you may, at your discretion, make the bird all beak, or all claw, all head, or all drumstick, as you please to develop it, before the shell breaks, by a special application of heat. It is a chick, no doubt, but a monstrous chick; and something like such a chick was I. Circumstances, in my very early days, hatched my character altogether out of equilibrium.

The caloric had been applied quite differently in my mother's case, and produced a prodigy of quite another sort.

I loved my mother with a very warm, but, I am now conscious, with a somewhat

contemptuous affection. It never was an angry nor an arrogant contempt; a very tender one, on the contrary. She loved me, I am sure, as well as she was capable of loving a child—better than she ever loved my sister—and I would have laid down my life for her; but, with all my love, I looked down upon her, although I did not know it, till I thought my life over in the melancholy honesty of solitude.

I am not romantic. If I ever was it is time I should be cured of all that. I can laugh heartily, but I think I sigh more than most people.

I am not a bit shy, but I like solitude; partly because I regard my kind with not unjust suspicion.

I am speaking very frankly. I enjoy, perhaps you think cynically, this hard-featured self-delineation. I don't spare myself; I need not spare any one else. But I am not a cynic. There is vacillation and timidity in that ironical egotism. It is some-

thing deeper with me. I don't delight in that sordid philosophy. I have encountered magnanimity and self-devotion on earth. It is not true that there is neither nobility nor beauty in human nature, that is not also more or less shabby and grotesque.

I have an odd story to tell. On my father's side I am the grand-daughter of a viscount; on my mother's, the grand-daughter of a baronet. I have had my early glimpses of the great world, and a wondrous long stare round the dark world beneath it.

When I lower my hand, and in one of the momentary reveries that tempt a desultory writer tickle my cheek slowly with the feathered end of my pen—for I don't incise my sentences with a point of steel, but, in the old fashion, wing my words with a possibly too appropriate grey-goose plume—I look through a tall window in an old house on the scenery I have loved best and earliest in the world. The noble Welch mountains are on my right, the purple headlands stooping

grandly into the waves ; I look upon the sea, the enchanted element, my first love and my last! How often I lean upon my hand and smile back upon the waters that silently smile on me, rejoicing under the Summer heavens ; and in wintry moonlights, when the north wind drives the awful waves upon the rocks, and I see the foam shooting cloud after cloud into the air, I have found myself, after long hours, still gazing, as if my breath were frozen, on the one peaked black rock, thinking what the storm and foam once gave me up there, until, with a sudden terror, and a gasp, I wake from the spell, and recoil from the white image, as if a spirit had been talking with me all the time.

From this same window, in the foreground, I see, in morning light or melancholy sunset, with very perfect and friendly trust, the shadowy old churchyard, where I have arranged my narrow bed shall be. There my mother-earth, at last, shall hold me in

her bosom, and I shall find my anodyne and rest. There over me shall hover through the old church windows faintly the sweet hymns and the voices in prayer I heard long ago; there the shadow of tower and tree shall slowly move over the grass above me, from dawn till night, and there, within the fresh and solemn sound of its waves, I shall lie near the ceaseless fall and flow of the sea I loved so well.

I am not sorry, as I sit here, with my vain recollections and my direful knowledge, that my life has been what it was.

A member of the upper ten thousand, I should have known nothing. I have bought my knowledge dear. But truth is a priceless jewel. Would you part with it, fellow-mourner, and return to the simplicities and illusions of early days? Consider the question truly; be honest; and you will answer "no." In the volume of memory, every page of which, like "Cornelius Agrippa's bloody book," has power to evoke a

spectre, would you yet erase a line? We can willingly part with nothing that ever was part of mine, or memory, or self. The lamentable past is our own for ever.

Thank Heaven, my childhood was passed in a tranquil nook, where the roar of the world's traffic is not so much as heard; among scenery, where there lurks little capital, and no enterprise; where the good people are asleep; and where, therefore, the irreparable improvements that in other places carry on their pitiless work of obliteration are undreamed of. I am looking out on scenes that remain unchanged as heaven itself. The Summer comes and goes; the Autumn drifts of leaves, and Winter snows; and all things here remain as my round childish eyes beheld them in stupid wonder and delight when first the world was opening upon them. The trees, the tower, the stile, the very gravestones, are my earliest friends; I stretch my arms to the mountains, as if I could fold them to

my heart. And in the opening through the ancient trees, the great estuary stretches northward, wider and wider, into the grey horizon of the open sea.

The sinking sun askance,
  Spreads a dull glare,
  Through evening air ;
And, in a happy trance,
  Forest and wave, and white cliff stand,
  Like an enchanted sea and land.

The sea-breeze wakens clear and cold,
  Over the azure wide ;
Before whose breath, in threads of gold,
  The ruddy ripples glide,
And chasing, break and mingle ;
  While clear as bells,
  Each wavelet tells,
O'er the stones on the hollow shingle.

The rising of winds and the fall of the waves!
I love the music of shingle and caves,
And the billows that travel so far to die,
In foam, on the loved shore where they lie.
I lean my cold cheek on my hand ;
  And as a child, with open eyes,
  Listens, in a dim surprise,
  To some high story
  Of grief and glory,
It cannot understand ;
So, like that child,
To meanings of a music wild,
I listen, in a rapture lonely,
Not understanding, listening only,

To a story not for me ;
And let my fancies come and go,
And fall and flow,
With the eternal sea.

And so, to leave rhyme, and return to prose, I end my preface, and begin my story here.

CHAPTER I.

AN ARRIVAL.

ONE of the earliest scenes I can remember with perfect distinctness is this. My sister and I, still denizens of the nursery, had come down to take our tea with good old Rebecca Torkill, the Malory housekeeper, in the room we called the cedar parlour. It is a long and rather sombre room, with two tall windows looking out upon the shadowy court-yard. There are on the wall some dingy portraits, whose pale faces peep out, as it were, through a background of black fog, from the canvas; and there is one, in better order than the others, of a grave man in the stately costume of

James the First, which hangs over the mantel-piece. As a child I loved this room; I loved the half-decipherable pictures; it was solemn and even gloomy, but it was with the delightful gloom and solemnity of one of Rebecca Torkill's stories of castles, giants, and goblins.

It was evening now, with a stormy, red sky in the west. Rebecca and we two children were seated round the table, sipping our tea, eating hot cake, and listening to her oft-told tale, entitled the Knight of the Black Castle.

This knight, habited in black, lived in his black castle, in the centre of a dark wood, and being a giant, and an ogre, and something of a magician besides, he used to ride out at nightfall with a couple of great black bags, to stow his prey in, at his saddle-bow, for the purpose of visiting such houses as had their nurseries well-stocked with children. His tall black horse, when he dismounted, waited at the hall-door, which,

however mighty its bars and bolts, could not resist certain magical words which he uttered in a sepulchral voice,

> "Yoke, yoke,
> Iron and oak;
> One, two, and three,
> Open to me."

At this charmed summons the door turned instantly on its hinges, without warning of creek or rattle, and the black knight mounted the stairs to the nursery, and was drawing the children softly out of their beds, by their feet, before any one knew he was near.

As this story, which with childish love of iteration we were listening to now for the fiftieth time, went on, I, whose chair faced the window, saw a tall man on a tall horse —both looked black enough against the red sky—ride by at a walk.

I thought it was the gaunt old vicar, who used to ride up now and then to visit our gardener's mother, who was sick and weak, and troubling my head no more about him,

was instantly as much absorbed as ever in the predatory prowlings of the Knight of the Black Castle.

It was not until I saw Rebecca's face, in which I was staring with the steadiness of an eager interest, undergo a sudden and uncomfortable change, that I discovered my error. She stopped in the middle of a sentence, and her eyes were fixed on the door. Mine followed hers thither. I was more than startled. In the very crisis of a tale of terror, ready to believe any horror, I thought, for a moment, that I actually beheld the Black Knight, and felt that his horse, no doubt, and his saddle-bags, were waiting at the hall-door to receive me and my sister.

What I did see was a man who looked to me gigantic. He seemed to fill the tall door-case. His dress was dark, and he had a pair of leather overalls, I believe they called them, which had very much the effect of jack-boots, and he had a low-crowned hat on. His hair was long and black, his pro-

minent black eyes were fixed on us, his face was long, but handsome, and deadly pale, as it seemed to me, from intense anger. A child's instinctive reading of countenance is seldom at fault. The ideas of power and mystery surround grown persons in the eyes of children. A gloomy or forbidding face upon a person of great stature inspires something like panic; and if that person is a stranger, and evidently transported with anger, his mere appearance in the same room will, I can answer for it, frighten a child half into hysterics. This alarming face, with its black knit brows, and very blue shorn chin, was to me all the more fearful that it was that of a man no longer young. He advanced to the table with two strides, and said, in resonant, deep tones, to which my very heart seemed to vibrate:

"Mr. Ware's not here, but he will be, soon enough; you give him that;" and he hammered down a letter on the table, with

a thump of his huge fist. "That's my answer; and tell him, moreover, that I took his letter,"—and he plucked an open letter deliberately from his great-coat pocket—"and tore it, this way and that way, across and across," and he suited the action fiercely to the words, "and left it for him, there!"

So saying, he slapped down the pieces with his big hand, and made our tea-spoons jump and jingle in our cups, and turned and strode again to the door.

"And tell him this," he added, in a tone of calmer hatred, turning his awful face on us again, "that there's a God above us, who judges righteously."

The door shut, and we saw him no more. I and my sister burst into clamorous tears, and roared and cried for a full half-hour, from sheer fright—a demonstration which, for a time, gave Rebecca Torkill ample occupation for all her energies and adroitness.

This recollection remains, with all the

colouring and exaggeration of a horrible impression received in childhood, fixed in my imagination. I and dear Nelly long remembered the apparition, and in our plays used to call him, after the goblin hero of the romance to which we had been listening when he entered, the Knight of the Black Castle.

The adventure made, indeed, a profound impression upon our nerves, and I have related it, with more detail than it seems to deserve, because it was, in truth, connected with my story; and I afterwards, unexpectedly, saw a good deal more of the awful man in whose presence my heart had quaked, and after whose visit I and my sister seemed for days to have drunk of "the cup of trembling."

I must take up my story now at a point a great many years later.

Let the reader fancy me and my sister Helen; I, dark-haired, and a few months past sixteen; she, with flaxen, or rather

golden hair and large blue eyes, and only fifteen, standing in the hall at Malory, lighted with two candles; one in the old-fashioned glass bell that swings by three chains from the ceiling, the other carried out hastily from the housekeeper's room, and flaming on the table, in the foggy puffs of the February night air that entered at the wide-open hall-door.

Old Rebecca Torkill stood on the steps, with her broad hand shading her eyes, as if the moon dazzled them.

"There's nothing, dear; no, Miss Helen, it mustn't a' bin the gate. There's no sign o' nothin' comin' up, and no sound nor nothing at all; come in, dear; you shouldn't a' come out to the open door, with your cough, in this fog."

So in she stumped, and shut the door; and we saw no more of the dark trunks and boughs of the elms at the other side of the courtyard, with the smoky mist between; and we three trooped together to the house-

keeper's room, where we had taken up our temporary quarters.

This was the second false alarm that night, sounded, in Helen's fancy, by the quavering scream of the old iron gate. We had to wait and watch in the fever of expectation for some time longer.

Our old house of Malory was, at the best, in the forlorn condition of a ship of war out of commission. Old Rebecca and two rustic maids, and Thomas Jones, who was boots, gardener, hen-wife, and farmer, were all the hands we could boast; and at least three-fourths of the rooms were locked up, with shutters closed; and many of them, from year to year, never saw the light, and lay in perennial dust.

The truth is, my father and mother seldom visited Malory. They had a house in London, and led a very gay life; were very "good people," immensely in request, and everywhere. Their rural life was not at Malory, but spent in making visits at one

country-house after another. Helen and I, their only children, saw very little of them. We sometimes were summoned up to town for a month or two for lessons in dancing, music, and other things, but there we saw little more of them than at home. The being in society, judging by its effects upon them, appeared to me a very harassing and laborious profession. I always felt that we were half in the way and half out of sight in town, and was immensely relieved when we were dismissed again to our holland frocks, and to the beloved solitudes of Malory.

This was a momentous night. We were expecting the arrival of a new governess, or rather companion.

Laura Grey—we knew no more than her name, for in his hurried note we could not read whether she was Miss or Mrs.—my father had told us, was to arrive this night at about nine o'clock. I had asked him, when he paid his last visit of a day here,

and announced the coming event, whether she was a married lady; to which he answered, laughing,

"You wise little woman! That's a very pertinent question, though I never thought of it, and I have been addressing her as Miss Grey all this time. She certainly is old enough to be married."

"Is she cross, papa, I wonder?" I further inquired.

"Not cross—perhaps a little severe. 'She whipped two female 'prentices to death, and hid them in the coal-hole,' or something of that kind, but she has a very cool temper;" and so he amused himself with my curiosity.

Now, although we knew that all this, including the quotation, was spoken in jest, it left an uncomfortable suspicion. Was this woman old and ill-tempered? A great deal was in the power of a governess here. An artful woman, who liked power, and did not like us, might make us very miserable.

At length the little party in the house-

keeper's room did hear sounds at which we all started up with one consent. They were the trot of a horse's hoofs and the roll of wheels, and before we reached the hall-door the bell was ringing.

Rebecca swung open the door, and we saw in the shadow of the house, with the wheels touching the steps, a one-horse conveyance, with some luggage on top, dimly lighted by the candles in the hall.

A little bonnet was turned towards us from the windows; we could not see what the face was like; a slender hand turned the handle, and a lady, whose figure, though enveloped in a tweed cloak, looked very slight and pretty, came down, and ran up the steps, and hesitated, and being greeted encouragingly by Rebecca Torkill, entered the hall smiling, and showed a very pretty and modest face, rather pale, and very young.

"My name is Grey; I am the new governess," she said, in a pleasant voice, which,

with her pretty looks, was very engaging; "and these are the young ladies?" she continued, glancing at Rebecca and back again at us; you are Ethel, and you Helen Ware?" and a little timidly she offered her hand to each.

I liked her already.

"Shall I go with you to your room," I asked, "while Rebecca is making tea for us in the housekeeper's room? We thought we should be more comfortable there to-night."

"I'm so glad—I shall feel quite at home. It is the very thing I should have liked," she said; and talked on as I led her to her room, which, though very old-fashioned, looked extremely cosy, with a good fire flickering abroad and above on walls and ceiling.

I remember everything about that evening so well. I have reason to remember Miss Laura Grey. Some people would have said that there was not a regular feature in

her face, except her eyes, which were very fine; but she had beautiful little teeth, and a skin wonderfully smooth and clear, and there was refinement and energy in her face, which was pale and spiritual, and indescribably engaging. To my mind, whether according to rule or not, she was nothing short of beautiful.

I have reason to remember that pale, pretty young face. The picture is clear and living before me this moment, as it was then in the firelight. Standing there, she smiled on me very kindly—she looked as if she would have kissed me—and then, suddenly thoughtful, she stretched her slender hands to the fire, and, in a momentary reverie, sighed very deeply.

I left her, softly, with her trunks and boxes, which Thomas Jones had already carried up, and ran downstairs.

I remember the pictures of that night with supernatural distinctness; for at that point of time fate changed my life, and with

pretty Miss Grey another pale figure entered, draped in black, and calamity was my mate for many a day after.

Our tea-party, however, this night in Mrs. Torkill's room, was very happy. I don't remember what we talked about, but we were in high good-humour with our young lady-superioress, and she seemed to like us.

I am going to tell you very shortly my impressions of this lady. I never met anyone in my life who had the same influence over me; and, for a time, it puzzled me. When we were not at French, German, music —our studies, in fact—she was exactly like one of ourselves, always ready to do whatever we liked best, always pleasant, gentle, and, in her way, even merry. When she was alone, or thinking, she was sad. That seemed the habit of her mind; but she was naturally gay and sympathetic, as ready as we for a walk on the strand to pick up shells, for a ride on the donkeys to Penruthyn Priory, to take a sail or a row on

the estuary, or a drive in our little pony-carriage anywhere. Sometimes on our rambles we would cross the stile and go into the pretty little churchyard that lies to the left of Malory, near the sea, and if it was a sunny day we would read the old inscriptions and loiter away half an hour among the tombstones.

And when we came home to tea we would sit round the fire and tell stories, of which she had ever so many, German, French, Scotch, Irish, Icelandic, and I know not what; and sometimes we went to the housekeeper's room, and, with Rebecca Torkill's leave, made a hot cake, and baked it ourselves on the griddle there, with great delight.

The secret of Laura Grey's power was in her gentle temper, her inflexible conscience, and her angelic firmness in all matters of duty. I never saw her excited, or for a moment impatient; and at idle times, as I said, she was one of ourselves. The only

threat she ever used was to tell us that she could not stay at Malory as our governess if we would not do what she thought right. There is in young people an instinctive perception of motive, and no truer spirit than Laura Grey ever lived on earth. I loved her. I had no fear of her. She was our gentle companion and playmate; and yet, in a certain sense, I never stood so much in awe of any human being.

Only a few days after Laura Grey had come home, we were sitting in our accustomed room, which was stately, but not uncomfortably spacious, and, like many at the same side of the house, panelled up to the ceiling. I remember, it was just at the hour of the still early sunset, and the ruddy beams were streaming their last through the trunks of the great elms. We were in high chat over Helen's little sparrow, Dickie, a wonderful bird, whose appetite and spirits we were always discussing, when the door opened, and Rebecca said, "Young

ladies, please, here's Mr. Carmel;" and Miss Grey, for the first time, saw a certain person who turns up at intervals and in odd scenes in the course of this autobiography.

The door is at some distance from the window, and through its panes across that space upon the opposite wall the glow of sunset fell mistily, making the clear shadow, in which our visitor stood, deeper. The figure stood out against this background like a pale old portrait, his black dress almost blended with the background; but, indistinct as it was, it was easy to see that the dress he wore was of some ecclesiastical fashion not in use among Church of England men. The coat came down a good deal lower than his knees. His thin slight figure gave him an effect of height far greater than his real stature; his fine forehead showed very white in contrast with his close dark hair, and his thin, delicate features, as he stepped slowly in, with an ascetic smile, and his

hand extended, accorded well with ideas of abstinence and penance. Gentle as was his manner, there was something of authority also in it, and in the tones of his voice.

"How do you do, Miss Ethel? How do you do, Miss Helen? I am going to write my weekly note to your mamma, and—oh! Miss Grey, I believe?"—he interrupted himself, and bowed rather low to the young governess, disclosing the small tonsure on the top of his head.

Miss Grey acknowledged his bow, but I could see that she was puzzled and surprised.

"I am to tell your mamma, I hope, that you are both quite well?" he said, addressing himself to me, and taking my hand; "and in good spirits, I suppose, Miss Grey?" he said, apparently recollecting that she was to be recognised; "I may say that?"

He turned to her, still holding my hand.

"Yes, they are quite well, and, I believe,

happy," she said, still looking at him, I could see, with curiosity.

It was a remarkable countenance, with large earnest eyes, and a mouth small and melancholy, with those brilliant red lips that people associate with early decay. It was a pale face of suffering and decision, which so vaguely indicated his years that he might be any age you please, from six-and-twenty up to six-and-thirty, as you allowed more or less in the account for the afflictions of a mental and bodily discipline.

He stood there for a little while chatting with us. There was something engaging in this man, cold, severe, and melancholy as his manner was. I was conscious that he was agreeable, and, young as I was, I felt that he was a man of unusual learning and ability.

In a little time he left us. It was now twilight, and we saw him, with his slight stoop, pass our window with slow step and downcast eyes.

CHAPTER II.

OUR CURIOSITY IS PIQUED.

AND so that odd vision was gone; and Laura Grey turned to us eagerly for information.

We could not give her much. We were ourselves so familiar with the fact of Mr. Carmel's existence, that it never occurred to us that his appearance could be a surprise to any one.

Mr. Carmel had come about eight months before to reside in the small old house in which the land-steward had once been harboured, and which, built in continuation of the side of the house, forms a sort of retreating wing to it, with a hall-door to itself, but under the same roof.

This Mr. Carmel was, undoubtedly, a Roman Catholic, and an ecclesiastic; of what order I know not. Possibly he was a Jesuit. I never was very learned or very curious upon such points; but some one, I forget who, told me that he positively was a member of the Society of Jesus.

My poor mother was very High Church, and on very friendly terms with Catholic personages of note. Mr. Carmel had been very ill, and was still in delicate health, and a quiet nook in the country, in the neighbourhood of the sea, had been ordered for him. The vacant house I have described she begged for his use from my father, who did not at all like the idea of lending it, as I could gather from the partly jocular and partly serious discussions which he maintained upon the point, every now and then, at the breakfast-table, when I was last in town.

I remember hearing my father say at last, "You know, my dear Mabel, I'm always

ready to do anything you like. I'll be a Catholic myself, if it gives you the least pleasure, only be sure, first, about this thing, that you really do like it. I shouldn't care if the man were hanged—he very likely deserves it—but I'll give him my house if it makes you happy. You must remember, though, the Cardyllion people won't like it, and you'll be talked about, and I daresay he'll make nuns of Ethel and Helen. He won't get a great deal by that, I'm afraid. And I don't see why those pious people—Jesuits, and that sort of persons, who don't know what to do with their money—should not take a house for him if he wants it, or what business they have quartering their friars and rubbish upon poor Protestants like you and me."

The end of it was that about two months later this Mr. Carmel arrived, duly accredited by my father, who told me when he paid us one of his visits of a day, soon after, that he was under promise not to talk to us

about religion, and that if he did I was to write to tell him immediately.

When I had told my story to Laura Grey, she was thoughtful for a little time.

"Are his visits only once a week?" she asked.

"Yes," said I.

"And does he stay as short a time always?" she continued.

We both agreed that he usually stayed a little longer.

"And has he never talked on the subject of religion?"

"No, never. He has talked about shells, or flowers, or anything he found us employed about, and always told us something curious or interesting. I had heard papa say that he was engaged upon a work from which great things were expected, and boxes of books were perpetually coming and going between him and his correspondents."

She was not quite satisfied, and in a few days there arrived from London two little

books on the great controversy between Luther and the Pope; and out of these, to the best of her poor ability, she drilled us, by way of a prophylactic against Mr. Carmel's possible machinations.

It did not appear, however, to be Mr. Carmel's mission to flutter the little nest of heresy so near him. When he paid his next visit, it so happened that one of these duodecimo disputants lay upon the table. Without thinking, as he talked, he raised it, and read the title on the cover, and smiled gently. Miss Grey blushed. She had not intended disclosing her suspicions.

"In two different regiments, Miss Grey," he said, "but both under the same king;" and he laid the book quietly upon the table again, and talked on of something quite different.

Laura Grey, in a short time, became less suspicious of Mr. Carmel, and rather enjoyed his little visits, and looked forward with pleasure to them.

Could you imagine a quieter or more primitive life than ours, or, on earth, a much happier one?

Malory owns an old-fashioned square pew in the aisle of the pretty church of Cardyllion. In this spacious pew we three sat every Sunday, and on one of these occasions, a few weeks after Miss Grey's arrival, from my corner I thought I saw a stranger in the Verney seat, which is at the opposite side of the aisle, and had not had an occupant for several months. There was certainly a man in it; but the stove that stood nearly between us would not allow me to see more than his elbow, and the corner of an open book, from which I suppose he was reading.

I was not particularly curious about this person. I knew that the Verneys, who were distant cousins of ours, were abroad, and the visitor was not likely to be very interesting.

A long, indistinct sermon interposed, and

I did not recollect to look at the Verney pew until the congregation were trooping decorously out, and we had got some way down the aisle. The pew was empty by that time.

"Some one in the Verneys' pew," I remarked to our governess, so soon as we were quite out of the shadow of the porch.

"Which is the Verneys' pew?" she asked.

I described it.

"Yes, there was. I have got a headache, my dear. Suppose we go home by the Mill Road?"

We agreed.

It is a very pretty, and in places rather a steep road, very narrow, and ascending with a high and wooded bank at its right, and a precipitous and thickly-planted glen to its left. The opposite side is thickly wooded also, and a stream far below splashes and tinkles among the rocks under the darkening foliage.

As we walked up this shadowy road, I

saw an old gentleman walking down it, towards us. He was descending at a brisk pace, and wore a chocolate-coloured great-coat, made with a cape, and fitting his slight figure closely. He wore a hat with a rather wide brim, turned up at the sides. His face was very brown. He had a thin, high nose, with very thin nostrils, rather prominent eyes, and carried his head high. Altogether he struck me as a particularly gentleman-like and ill-tempered looking old man, and his features wore a character of hauteur that was perfectly insolent.

He was pretty near us by the time I turned to warn our governess, who was beside me, to make way for him to pass. I did not speak; for I was a little startled to see that she was very much flushed, and almost instantly turned deadly pale.

We came nearly to a standstill, and the old gentleman was up to us in a few seconds. As he approached, his prominent eyes were fixed on Laura Grey. He stopped, with

the same haughty stare, and, raising his hat, said in a cold, rather high key, "Miss Grey, I think? Miss Laura Grey? You will not object, I dare say, to allow me a very few words?"

The young lady bowed very slightly, and said, in a low tone, "Certainly not."

I saw that she looked pained, and even faint. This old gentleman's manner, and the stern stare of his prominent eyes, embarrassed even me, who did not directly encounter them.

"Perhaps we had better go on, Helen and I, to the seat; we can wait for you there?" I said softly to her.

"Yes, dear, I think it will be as well," she answered gently.

We walked on slowly. The bench was not a hundred steps up the steep. It stands at the side of the road, with its back against the bank. From this seat I could see very well what passed, though, of course, quite out of hearing.

The old gentleman had a black cane in his fingers, which he poked about on the gravel. You would have said from his countenance that at every little stab he punched an enemy's eye out.

First, the gentleman made a little speech, with his head very high, and an air of determination and severity. The young lady seemed to answer, briefly and quietly. Then ensued a colloquy of a minute or more, during which the old gentleman's head nodded often with emphasis, and his gestures became much more decided. The young lady seemed to say little, and very quietly: her eyes were lowered to the ground as she spoke.

She said something, I suppose, which he chose to resent, for he smiled sarcastically, and raised his hat; then, suddenly resuming his gravity, he seemed to speak with a sharp and hectoring air, as if he were laying down the law upon some point once for all.

Laura Grey looked up sharply, with a

brilliant colour, and with her head high, replied rapidly for a minute or more, and turning away, without waiting for his answer, walked slowly, with her head still high, towards us.

The gentleman stood looking after her with his sarcastic smile, but that was gone in a moment, and he continued looking, with an angry face, and muttering to himself, until suddenly he turned away, and walked off at a quick pace down the path towards Cardyllion.

A little uneasily, Helen and I stood up to meet our governess. She was still flushed and breathing quickly, as people do from recent agitation.

"No bad news? Nothing unpleasant?" I asked, looking very eagerly into her face.

"No; no bad news, dear."

I took her hand. I felt that she was trembling a little, and she had become again more than usually pale. We walked homeward in silence.

Laura Grey seemed in deep and agitated thought. We did not, of course, disturb her. An unpleasant excitement like that always disposes one to silence. Not a word, I think, was uttered all the way to the steps of Malory. Laura Grey entered the hall, still silent, and when she came down to us, after an hour or two passed in her room, it was plain she had been crying.

CHAPTER III.

THE THIEF IN THE NIGHT.

OF what happened next I have a strangely imperfect recollection. I cannot tell you the intervals, or even the order, in which some of the events occurred. It is not that the mist of time obscures it; what I do recollect is dreadfully vivid; but there are spaces of the picture gone. I see faces of angels, and faces that make my heart sink; fragments of scenes. It is like something reflected in the pieces of a smashed looking-glass.

I have told you very little of Helen, my sister, my one darling on earth. There are things which people, after an interval of

half a life, have continually present to their minds, but cannot speak of. The idea of opening them to strangers is insupportable. A sense of profanation shuts the door, and we "wake" our dead alone. I could not have told you what I am going to write. I did not intend inscribing here more than the short, bleak result. But I write it as if to myself, and I will get through it.

To you it may seem that I make too much of this, which is, as Hamlet says, "common." But you have not known what it is to be for all your early life shut out from all but one beloved companion, and never after to have found another.

Helen had a cough, and Laura Grey had written to mamma, who was then in Warwickshire, about it. She was referred to the Cardyllion doctor. He came; he was a skilful man. There were the hushed, dreadful moments, while he listened, through his stethoscope, thoughtfully, to the "still, small voice" of fate, to us inaudible, pronounc-

ing on the dread issues of life or death.

"No sounder lungs in England," said Doctor Mervyn, looking up with a congratulatory smile.

He told her, only, that she must not go in the way of cold, and by-and-by sent her two bottles from his surgery; and so we were all happy once more.

But doctors' advices, like the warnings of fate, are seldom obeyed; least of all by the young. Nelly's little pet-sparrow was ailing, or we fancied it was. She and I were up every hour during the night to see after it. Next evening Nelly had a slight pain in her chest. It became worse, and by twelve o'clock was so intense that Laura Grey, in alarm, sent to Cardyllion for the doctor. Thomas Jones came back without him, after a delay of an hour. He had been called away to make a visit somewhere, but the moment he came back he would come to Malory.

It came to be three o'clock; he had not

appeared; darling Nelly was in actual torture. Again Doctor Mervyn was sent for; and again, after a delay, the messenger returned with the same dismaying answer. The governess and Rebecca Torkill exhausted in vain their little list of remedies. I was growing terrified. Intuitively I perceived the danger. The doctor was my last earthly hope. Death, I saw, was drawing nearer and nearer every moment, and the doctor might be ten miles away. Think what it was to stand, helpless, by her. Can I ever forget her poor little face, flushed scarlet, the gasping and catching at breath, hands, throat, every sinew quivering in the mortal struggle!

At last a knock and a ring at the hall-door. I rushed to the window; the first chill grey of Winter's dawn hung sicklily over the landscape. No one was on the steps, or on the grey gravel of the court. But, yes—I do hear voices and steps upon the stair approaching. Oh! Heaven

be thanked, the doctor is come at last!

I ran out upon the lobby, just as I was, in my dressing-gown, with my hair about my shoulders, and slippers on my bare feet. A candlestick, with the candle burnt low, was standing on the broad head of the clumsy old bannister, and Mr. Carmel, in a black riding-coat, with his hat in his hand, and that kind of riding-boots that used to be called clerical, on, was talking in a low, earnest tone to our governess.

The faint grey from the low lobby window was lost at this point, and the delicate features of the pale ecclesiastic, and Miss Grey's pretty and anxious face, were lighted, like a fine portrait of Schalken's, by the candle only.

Throughout this time of agony and tumult, the memory of my retina remains unimpaired, and every picture retains its hold upon my brain. And, oh! had the doctor come? Yes, Mr. Carmel had ridden all the way, fourteen miles, to Llwynan, and

brought the doctor back with him. He might not have been here for hours otherwise. He was now downstairs making preparations, and would be in the room in a few minutes.

I looked at that fine, melancholy, energetic face as if he had saved me. I could not thank him. I turned and entered our room again, and told Nelly to be of good courage, that the doctor was come. "And, oh! please God, he'll do you good, my own darling, darling—precious darling!"

In a minute more the doctor was in the room. My eyes were fixed upon his face as he talked to his poor little patient; he did not look at all as he had done on his former visit. I see him before me as I write; his bald head shining in the candle-light, his dissatisfied and gloomy face, and his shrewd light blue eyes, reading her looks askance, as his fingers rested on her pulse.

I remember, as if the sick-room had changed into it, finding myself in the small room

opposite, with no one there but the doctor and Miss Grey, we three, in the cold morning light, and his saying, "Well, all this comes of violating directions. There is very intense inflammation, and her chest is in a most critical state."

Then Miss Grey said, after a moment's hush, the awful words, "Is there any danger?" and he answered shortly, "I wish I could say there wasn't." I felt my ears sing as if a pistol had been fired. No one spoke for another minute or more.

The doctor stayed, I think, for a long time, and he must have returned after, for he is mixed up in almost every scene I can remember during that jumbled day of terror.

There was, I know, but one day, and part of a night. But it seems to me as if whole nights intervened, and suns set and rose, and days uncounted and undistinguished passed, in that miserable period.

The pain subsided, but worse followed; a dreadful cough, that never ceased—a long,

agonised struggle against a slow drowning of the lungs. The doctor gave her up. They wanted me to leave the room, but I could not.

The hour came at last, and she was gone. The wild cry—the terrible farewell—nothing can move inexorable death. All was still.

As the ship lies serene in the caverns of the cold sea, and feels no more the fury of the wind, the strain of cable, and the crash of wave, this forlorn wreck lay quiet now. Oh! little Nelly! I could not believe it.

She lay in her nightdress under the white coverlet. Was this whole scene an awful vision, and was my heart breaking in vain? Oh, poor simple little Nelly, to think that you should have changed into anything so sublime and terrible!

I stood dumb by the bedside, staring at the white face that was never to move again. Such a look I had never seen before. The white glory of an angel was upon it.

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Rebecca Torkill spoke to me, I think. I remember her kind, sorrowful old face near me, but I did not hear what she said. I was in a stupor, or a trance. I had not shed a tear; I had not said a word. For a time I was all but mad. In the light of that beautiful transfiguration my heart was bursting with the wildest rebellion against the law of death that had murdered my innocent sister before my eyes; against the fate of which humanity is the sport; against the awful Power who made us! What spirit knows, till the hour of temptation, the height or depth of its own impiety?

Oh, gentle, patient little Nelly! The only good thing I can see in myself in those days is my tender love of you, and my deep inward certainty of my immeasurable inferiority. Gentle, humble little Nelly, who thought me so excelling in cleverness, in wisdom, and countless other perfections, how humble in my secret soul I

felt myself beside you, although I was too proud to say so! In your presence my fierce earthy nature stood revealed, and wherever I looked my shadow was cast along the ground by the pure light that shone from you.

I don't know what time passed without a word falling from my lips. I suppose people had other things to mind, and I was left to myself. But Laura Grey stole her hand into mine, she kissed me, and I felt her tears on my cheek.

"Ethel, darling, come with me," she said, crying, very gently. "You can come back again. You'll come with me, won't you? Our darling is happier, Ethel, than ever she could have been on earth, and she will never know change or sorrow again."

I began to sob distractedly. I do really believe I was half out of my mind. I began to talk to her volubly, vehemently, crying passionately all the time. I do not remem-

ber now a word I uttered; I know its purport only from the pain, and even horror, I remember in Laura Grey's pale face. It has taken a long and terrible discipline to expel that evil spirit. I know what I was in those days. My pilgrimage since then has been by steep and solitary paths, in great dangers, in darkness, in fear; I have eaten the bread of affliction, and my drink has been of the waters of bitterness; I am tired and footsore yet, though through a glass darkly, I think I can now see why it all was, and I thank God with a contrite heart for the terrors and the mercies he has shown me. I begin to discover through the mist who was the one friend who never forsook me through all those stupendous wanderings, and I long for the time when I shall close my tired eyes, all being over, and lie at the feet of my Saviour.

CHAPTER IV.

MY FATHER.

FORTH sped Laura Grey's letter to mamma. She was then at Roydon; papa was with her. The Easter recess had just sent down some distinguished visitors, who were glad to clear their heads for a few days of the hum of the Houses and the smell of the river; and my father, although not in the House, ran down with them. Little Nelly had been his pet, as I was mamma's.

There was an awkwardness in post-office arrangements between the two places then, and letters had to make a considerable circuit. There was a delay of three clear

days between the despatch of the letter and the reply.

I must say a word about papa. He was about the most agreeable and careless man on earth. There are men whom no fortune could keep out of debt. A man of that sort seems to me not to have any defined want or enjoyment, but the horizon of his necessities expands in proportion as he rises in fortune, and always exceeds the ring-fence of his estate. What its periphery may be, or his own real wants, signifies very little. His permanent necessity is always to exceed his revenue.

I don't think my father's feelings were very deep. He was a good-natured husband, but, I am afraid, not a good one. I loved him better than I loved mamma. Children are always captivated by gaiety and indulgence. I was not of an age to judge of higher things, and I never missed the article of religion, of which, I believe, he had none. Although he lived so much in

society that he might almost be said to have no domestic life whatever, no man could be simpler, less suspicious, or more easily imposed upon.

The answer to Miss Grey's letter was the arrival of my father. He was in passionate grief, and in a state of high excitement. He ran up stairs, without waiting to take off his hat; but at the door of our darling's room he hesitated. I did not know he had arrived till I heard him, some minutes later, walking up and down the room, sobbing. Though he was selfish, he was affectionate. No one liked to go in to disturb him. She lay by this time in her coffin. The tint of clay darkened her pretty features. The angelic beauty that belongs to death is transitory beyond all others. I would not look at her again, to obscure its glory. She lay now in her shroud, a forlorn sunken image of decay.

When he came out he talked wildly and bitterly. His darling had been murdered, he said, by neglect. He upbraided us all

round, including Rebecca Torkill, for our cruel carelessness. He blamed the doctor. He had no right, in a country where there was but one physician, to go so far away as fourteen miles, and to stay away so long. He denounced even his treatment. He ought to have bled her. It was, every one knew, the proper way of treating such a case.

Than Laura Grey, no one could have been more scrupulously careful. She could not have prevented, even if she had suspected the possibility of such a thing, her stealing out of bed now and then to look at her sick sparrow. All this injustice was, however, but the raving of his grief.

In poor little Nelly's room my father's affectionate nature was convulsed with sorrow. When he came down I cried with him for a long time. I think this affliction had drawn us nearer. He was more tender to me than I ever remembered him before.

At last the ghastly wait and suspense

were ended. I saw no more strange faces in the lobbies; and the strange voices on the stairs and footsteps in the room, and the muffled sounds that made me feel faint, were heard no more. The funeral was over, and pretty Nelly was gone for ever and ever, and I would come in and go out and read my books, and take my walks alone; and the flowers, and the long Summer evenings, and the songs of birds would come again, and the leaves make their soft shadow in the nooks where we used to sit together in the wood, but gentle little Nelly would never come again.

During these terrible days, Laura Grey was a sister to me, both in affection and in sorrow. Oh, Laura, can I ever forget your tender, patient sympathy? How often my thoughts recall your loved face as I lay my head upon my lonely pillow, and my blessings follow you over the wide sea to your far-off home!

Papa took a long solitary ride that day

through the warren, and away by Penruthyn Priory, and did not return till dark.

When he did, he sent for me. I found him in the room which, in the old-fashioned style, was called the oak parlour. A log-fire—we were well supplied from the woods in the rear of the house—lighted the room with a broad pale flicker. My father was looking ill and tired. He was leaning with his elbow on the mantel-piece, and said:

"Ethel, darling, I want to know what you would like best. We are going abroad for a little time; it is the only thing for your mamma. This place would kill her. I shall be leaving this to-morrow afternoon, and you can make up your mind which you would like best—to come with us and travel for some months, or to wait here, with Miss Grey, until our return. You shall do precisely whatever you like best—I don't wish you to hurry yourself, darling. I'd rather you thought it over at your leisure."

Then he sat down and talked about other

things; and turned about to the fire with his decanter of sherry by him, and drank a good many glasses, and leaned back in his chair before he had finished it.

My father, I thought, was dozing, but was not sure; and being a good deal in awe of him—a natural consequence of seeing so little of him—I did not venture either to waken him, or to leave the room without his permission.

There are two doors in that room. I was standing irresolutely near that which is next the window, when the other opened, and the long whiskers and good-humoured, sensible face of portly Wynne Williams, the town-clerk and attorney of Cardyllion, entered. My father awoke, with a start, at the sound, and seeing him, smiled and extended his hand.

"How d'ye do, Williams? It's so good of you to come. Sit down. I'm off to-morrow, so I sent you a note. Try that sherry; it is better than I thought. And

now I must tell you, that old scoundrel, Rokestone, is going to foreclose the mortgage, and they have served one of the tenants at Darlip with an ejectment; that's more serious; I fancy he means mischief there also. What do you think?"

"I always thought he might give us annoyance there; but Mandrick's opinion was with us. Do you wish me to look after that?"

"Certainly. And he's bothering me about that trust."

"I know," said Mr. Wynne Williams, with rather gloomy rumination.

"That fellow has lost me—I was reckoning it up only a day or two ago—between five and six thousands pounds in mere law costs, beside all the direct mischief he has done me; and he has twice lost me a seat in the House—first by maintaining that petition at King's Firkins, a thing that must have dropped but for his money; he had nothing on earth to do with it, and

no motive but his personal, fiendish feelings; and next by getting up the contest against me at Shillingsworth, where, you know, it was ten to one; by Heavens! I should have had a walk over. There is not an injury that man could do me he has not done. I can prove that he swore he would strip me of everything I possessed. It is ever so many years since I saw him—you know all about it—and the miscreant pursues me still relentlessly. He swore to old Dymock, I'm told, and I believe it, that he would never rest till he had brought me to a prison. I could have him before a jury for that. There's some remedy, I suppose, there's some protection? If I had done what I wished ten years ago, I'd have had him out; it's not too late yet to try whether pistols can't settle it. I wish I had not taken advice; in a matter like that, the man who does always does wrong. I daresay, Williams, you think with me, now it's a case for cutting the Gordian knot?"

"I should not advise it, sir; he's an old man, and he's not afraid of what people say, and people know he has fought. He'd have you in the Queen's Bench, and as his feelings are of that nature, I'd not leave him the chance—I wouldn't trust him."

"It's not easy to know what one should do—a miscreant like that. I hope and pray that the curse of——"

My father spoke with a fierce tremble in his voice, and at that moment he saw me. He had forgotten that I was in the room, and said instantly:

"You may as well run away, dear; Mr. Williams and I have some business to talk over—and tiresome business it is. Good night, darling."

So away I went, glad of my escape, and left them talking. My father rang the bell soon, and called for more wine; so I suppose the council sat till late. I joined Laura Grey, to whom I related all that had passed, and my decision on the question,

which was, to remain with her at Malory. She kissed me, and said, after a moment's thought,

"But will they think it unkind of you, preferring to remain here?"

"No," I said; "I think I should be rather in the way if I went; and, besides, I know papa is never high with anyone, and really means what he says; and I should feel a little strange with them. They are very kind, and love me very much, I know, and so do I love them; but I see them so little, and you are such a friend, and I don't wish to leave this place; I like it better than any other in all the world; and I feel at home with you, more than I could with anyone else in the world."

So that point was settled, and next day papa took leave of me very affectionately; and, notwithstanding his excited language, I heard nothing more of pistols and Mr. Rokestone. But many things were to happen before I saw papa again.

I remained, therefore, at Malory, and Laura Grey with me; and the shadow of Mr. Carmel passed the window every evening, but he did not come in to see us, as he used. He made inquiries at the door instead, and talked, sometimes for five minutes together, with Rebecca Torkill. I was a little hurt at this; I did not pretend to Laura to perceive it; but in our walks, or returning in the evening, if by chance I saw his tall, thin, but graceful figure approaching by the same path, I used to make her turn aside and avoid him by a detour. In so lonely a place as Malory the change was marked; and there was pain in that neglect. I would not let him fancy, however, that I wished, any more than he, to renew our old and near acquaintance.

So weeks passed away, and leafy May had come, and Laura Grey and I were sitting in our accustomed room, in the evening, talking in our desultory way.

"Don't you think papa very handsome?" I asked.

"Yes, he is handsome," she answered; "there is something refined as well as clever in his face; and his eyes are fine; and all that goes a great way. But many people might think him not actually handsome, though very good-looking and prepossessing."

"They must be hard to please," I said.

She smiled good-naturedly.

"Mamma fell in love with him at first sight, Rebecca Torkill says," I persisted, "and mamma was not easily pleased. There was a gentleman who was wildly in love with her; a man of very old family, Rebecca says, and good-looking, but she would not look at him when once she had seen papa."

"I think I heard of that. He is a baronet now; but he was a great deal older than Mr. Ware, I believe."

"Yes, he was; but Rebecca says he did not look ten years older than papa, and *he* was very young indeed then," I answered. "It was well for mamma she did not like him, for I once heard Rebecca say that he was a very bad man."

"Did you ever hear of mamma's aunt Lorrimer?" I resumed, after a little pause.

"Not that I recollect."

"She is very rich, Rebecca says. She has a house in London, but she is hardly ever there. She's not very old—not sixty. Rebecca is always wondering whom she will leave her money to; but that don't much matter, for I believe we have more than we want. Papa says, about ten years ago, she lived for nothing but society, and was everywhere; and now she has quite given up all that, and wanders about the Continent."

Our conversation subsided; and there was a short interval in which neither spoke.

"Why is it, Laura," said I, after this little

silence, "that you never tell me anything about yourself, and I am always telling you everything I think or remember? Why are you so secret? Why don't you tell me your story?"

"My story; what does it signify? I suppose it is about an average story. Some people are educated to be governesses; and some of us take to it later, or by accident; and we are amateurs, and do our best. The Jewish custom was wise; everyone should learn a mechanic's business. Saint Paul was a tent-maker. If fortune upsets the boat, it is well to have anything to lay hold of—anything rather than drowning; an hospital matron, a companion, a governess, there are not many chances, when things go wrong, between a poor woman and the workhouse."

"All this means, you will tell me nothing," I said.

"I am a governess, darling. What does it matter what I was? I am happier with

you than ever I thought I could be again. If I had a story that was pleasant to hear, there is no one on earth I would tell it to so readily; but my story—— There is no use in thinking over misfortune," she continued; "there is no greater waste of time than regretting, except wishing. I know, Ethel, you would not pain me. I can't talk about those things yet; I may another time."

"You shan't speak of them, Laura, unless you wish it. I am ashamed of having bothered you so." I kissed her. "But, will you tell me one thing, for I am really curious about it? I have been thinking about that very peculiar-looking old gentleman, who wore a chocolate-coloured great-coat, and met us in the Mill Walk, and talked to you, you remember, on the Sunday we returned from church that way. Now, I want you to tell me, is that old man's name Rokestone?"

"No, dear, it is not; I don't think he

even knows him. But isn't it time for us to have our tea? Will you make it, while I put our books up in the other room?"

So I undertook this office, and was alone.

The window was raised, the evening warm, and the sun by this time setting. It was the pensive hour when solitude is pleasant; when grief is mellowed, and even a thoughtless mind, like mine, is tinged with melancholy. I was thinking now of our recluse neighbour. I had seen him pass, as Miss Grey and I were talking. He still despatched those little notes about the inmates of Malory; for mamma always mentioned, when she wrote to me, in her wanderings on the Continent, that she had heard from Mr. Carmel that I was well, and was out every day with my governess, and so on. I wondered why he had quite given up those little weekly visits, and whether I could have unwittingly offended him.

These speculations would recur oftener than perhaps was quite consistent with the

disdain I affected on the subject. But people who live in cities have no idea how large a space in one's thoughts, in a solitude like Malory, a neighbour at all agreeable must occupy.

I was ruminating in a great arm-chair, with my hand supporting my head, and my eyes fixed on my foot, which was tapping the carpet, when I heard the cold, clear voice of Mr. Carmel at the window. I looked up, and my eyes met his.

CHAPTER V.

THE LITTLE BLACK BOOK.

OUR eyes met, I said; they remained fixed for a moment, and then mine dropped. I had been, as it were, detected, while meditating upon this capricious person. I daresay I even blushed; I certainly was embarrassed. He was repeating his salutation, "How d'ye do, Miss Ware?"

"Oh, I'm very well, thanks, Mr. Carmel," I answered, looking up; "and—and I heard from mamma on Thursday. They are very well; they are at Geneva now. They are thinking of going to Florence in about three weeks."

"I know; yes. And you have no thoughts of joining them?"

"Oh! none. I should not like to leave this. They have not said a word about it lately."

"It is such a time, Miss Ethel, since I had the pleasure of seeing you—I don't mean, of course, at a distance, but near enough to ask you how you are. I dared not ask to see you too soon, and I thought —I fancied—you wished your walks uninterrupted."

I saw that he had observed my strategy; I was not sorry.

"I have often wished to thank you, Mr. Carmel; you were so very kind."

"I had no opportunity, Miss Ethel," he answered, with more feeling than before. "My profession obliges me to be kind—but I had no opportunity—Miss Grey is quite well?"

"She is very well, thanks."

With a softened glory, in level lines, the beams of the setting sun broke, scattered, through the trunks of the old elms, and one

touched the head of the pale young man, as he stood at the window, looking in; his delicate and melancholy features were in the shade, and the golden light, through his thick, brown hair, shone softly, like the glory of a saint. As, standing thus, he looked down in a momentary reverie, Laura Grey came in, and paused, in manifest surprise, on seeing Mr. Carmel at the window.

I smiled, in spite of my efforts to look grave, and the governess, advancing, asked the young ecclesiastic how he was? Thus recalled, by a new voice, he smiled and talked with us for a few minutes. I think he saw our tea-equipage, and fancied that he might be, possibly, in the way; for he was taking his leave when I said, "Mr. Carmel, you must take tea before you go."

"Tea!—I find it very hard to resist. Will you allow me to take it, like a beggar-man, at the window? I shall feel less as if I were disturbing you; for you have only to shut the window down, when I grow prosy."

So, laughing, Laura Grey gave him a cup of tea, which he placed on the window-stone, and seating himself a little sideways on the bench that stands outside the window, he leaned in, with his hat off, and sipped his tea and chatted; and sitting as Miss Grey and I did, near the window, we made a very sociable little party of three.

I had quite given up the idea of our renewing our speaking acquaintance with Mr. Carmel, and here we were, talking away, on more affable terms than ever! It seemed to me like a dream.

I don't say that Mr. Carmel was chatting with the *insouciance* and gaiety of a French abbé. There was, on the contrary, something very peculiar, both in his countenance and manner, something that suggested the life and sufferings of an ascetic. Something also, not easily defined, of command; I think it was partly in the severe though gentle gravity with which he spoke anything like advice or opinion.

I felt a little awed in his presence, I could not exactly tell why; and yet I was more glad than I would have confessed that we were good friends again. He sipped his cup of tea slowly, as he talked, and was easily persuaded to take another.

"I see, Miss Ethel, you are looking at my book with curious eyes."

It was true; the book was a very thick and short volume, bound in black shagreen, with silver clasps, and lay on the window-stone, beside his cup. He took it up in his slender fingers, smiling as he looked at me.

"You wish to know what it is; but you are too ceremonious to ask me. I should be curious myself, if I saw it for the first time. I have often picked out a book from a library, simply for its characteristic binding. Some books look interesting. Now what do you take this to be?"

"Haven't you books called breviaries? I think this is one," said I.

"That is your guess; it is not a bad one

—but no, it is not a breviary. What do you say, Miss Grey?"

"Well, I say it is a book of the offices of the Church."

"Not a bad guess, either. But it is no such thing. I think I must tell you—it is what you would call a story-book."

"Really!" I exclaimed, and Miss Grey and I simultaneously conceived a longing to borrow it.

"The book is two hundred and seventy years old, and written in very old French. You would call them stories," he said, smiling on the back of the book; "but you must not laugh at them; for I believe them all implicitly. They are legends."

"Legends?" said I, eagerly—"I should so like to hear one. Do, pray, tell one of them."

"I'll read one, if you command me, into English. They are told here as shortly as it is possible to relate them. Here, for instance, is a legend of John of Parma. I

think I can read it in about two minutes."

"I'm sorry it is so short; do, pray, begin," I said.

Accordingly, there being still light enough to read by, he translated the legend as follows:—

"John of Parma, general of the order of Friars Minors, travelling one Winter's night, with some brothers of the order, the party went astray in a dense forest, where they wandered about for several hours, unable to find the right path. Wearied with their fruitless efforts, they at length knelt down, and having commended themselves to the protection of the mother of God, and of their patron, Saint Francis, began to recite the first nocturn of the Office of the Blessed Virgin. They had not been long so engaged, when they heard a bell in the distance, and rising at once, and following the direction whence the sound proceeded, soon came to an extensive abbey, at the gate of which they knocked for admittance.

The doors were instantly thrown open, and within they beheld a number of monks evidently awaiting their arrival, who, the moment they appeared, led them to a fire, washed their feet, and then seated them at a table, where supper stood ready; and having attended them during their meal, they conducted them to their beds. Wearied with their toilsome journey, the other travellers slept soundly; but John, rising in the night to pray, as was his custom, heard the bell ring for matins, and quitting his cell, followed the monks of the abbey to the chapel, to join with them in reciting the divine office.

"Arrived there, one of the monks began with this verse of the Thirty-fifth Psalm, 'Ibi ceciderunt qui operantur iniquitatem;' to which the choir responded, 'Expulsi sunt nec potuerunt stare.' Startled by the strange despairing tone in which the words were intoned, as well as by the fact that this is not the manner in which matins are

usually commenced, John's suspicions were aroused, and addressing the monks, he commanded them, in the name of the Saviour, to tell him who and what they were. Thus adjured, he who appeared an abbot replied, that they were all angels of darkness, who, at the prayer of the Blessed Virgin, and of Saint Francis, had been sent to serve him and his brethren in their need. As he spoke, all disappeared; and the next moment John found himself and his companions in a grotto, where they remained, absorbed in prayer and singing the praises of God, until the return of day enabled them to resume their journey."

"How picturesque that is!" I said, as he closed the little book.

He smiled, and answered:

"So it is. Dryden would have transmuted such a legend into noble verse; painters might find great pictures in it—but, to the faithful, it is more. To me, these legends are sweet and holy readings, telling

how the goodness, vigilance, and wisdom of God work by miracles for his children, and how these celestial manifestations have never ceased throughout the history of his Church on earth. To you they are, as I said, but stories; as such you may wish to look into them. I believe, Miss Grey, you may read them without danger." He smiled gently, as he looked at the governess.

"Oh! certainly, Laura," cried I. "I am so much obliged."

"It is very kind of you," said Miss Grey. "They are, I am sure, very interesting; but does this little book contain anything more?"

"Nothing, I am afraid, that could possibly interest you; nothing, in fact, but a few litanies, and what we call elevations—you will see in a moment. There is nothing controversial. I am no proselytiser, Miss Grey,"—he laughed a little—"my duty is quite of a different kind. I am collecting authorities, making extracts and precis, and

preparing a work, not all my own, for the press, under a greater than I."

"Recollect, Laura, it is lent to me—isn't it, Mr. Carmel?" I pleaded, as I took the little volume and turned over its pages.

"Very well—certainly," he acquiesced, smiling.

He stood up now. The twilight was deepening; he laid his hand on the window sash, and leaned his forehead upon it, as he looked in, and continued to chat for a few minutes longer; and then, with a slight adieu, he left us.

When he was gone, we talked him over a little.

"I wonder what he is?—a priest only or a Jesuit," said I; "or, perhaps, a member of some other order. I should like so much to know."

"You'd not be a bit wiser if you did," said Laura.

"Oh, you mean because I know nothing of those orders; but I could easily make

out. I think he would have told us to-night in the twilight, if we had asked him."

"I don't think he would have told us anything he had not determined beforehand to tell. He has told us nothing about himself we did not know already. We know he is a Roman Catholic, and an ecclesiastic—his tonsure proclaims that; and your mamma told you that he is writing a book, so that is no revelation either. I think he is profoundly reserved, cautious, and resolute; and with a kind of exterior gentleness, he seems to me to be really inflexible and imperious."

"I like that unconscious air of command, but I don't perceive those signs of cunning and reserve. He seemed to grow more communicative the longer he stayed," I answered.

"The darker it grew," she replied. "He is one of those persons who become more confident the more effectually their countenances are concealed. There ceases to be

any danger of a conflict between looks and language—a danger that embarrasses some people."

"You are suspicious this evening," I said. "I don't think you like him."

"I don't know him; but I fancy that, talk as he may to us, neither you nor I have for one moment a peep into his real mind. His world may be perfectly celestial and serene, or it may be an ambitious, dark, and bad one; but it is an invisible world for us."

The candles were by this time lighted, and Miss Grey was closing the window, when the glitter of the silver clasp of the little book caught her eye.

"Have you found anything?" said I.

"Only the book—I forgot all about it. I am almost sorry we allowed him to lend it."

"We borrowed it; I don't think he wanted to lend it," said I; "but, however it was, I'm very glad we have got it. One

would fancy you had lighted on a scorpion. I'm not afraid of it; I know it can't do anyone the least harm, for they are only stories."

"Oh, I think so. I don't see myself that they can do any harm; but I am almost sorry we have got into that sort of relation with him."

"What relation, Laura?"

"Borrowing books and discussing them."

"But we need not discuss them; I won't —and you are so well up in the controversy with your two books of theology, that I think he's in more danger of being converted than you. Give me the book, and I'll find out something to read to you."

CHAPTER VI.

A STRANGER APPEARS.

NEXT day Miss Grey and I were walking on the lonely road towards Penruthyn Priory. The sea lies beneath it on the right, and on the left is an old grass-grown bank, shaggy with brambles. Round a clump of ancient trees that stand at a bend of this green rampart, about a hundred steps before us, came, on a sudden, Mr. Carmel, and a man dressed also in black, slight, but not so tall as he. They were walking at a brisk pace, and the stranger was talking incessantly to his companion.

That did not prevent his observing us,

for I saw him slightly touch Mr. Carmel's arm with his elbow as he looked at us. Mr. Carmel evidently answered a question, and, as he did so, glanced at us; and immediately the stranger resumed his conversation. They were quickly up to us, and stopped. Mr. Carmel raised his hat, and asked leave to introduce his friend. We bowed, so did the stranger; but Mr. Carmel did not repeat his name very distinctly.

This friend was far from prepossessing. He was of middle height, and narrow-shouldered, what they call "putty-faced," and closely shorn, the region of the beard and whisker being defined in smooth dark blue. He looked about fifty. His movements were short and quick, and restless; he rather stooped, and his face and forehead inclined as if he were looking on the ground. But his eyes were not upon the ground; they were very fierce, but seldom rested for more than a moment on any one object. As he made his bow, rais-

ing his hat from his massive forehead, first to me, and afterwards to Miss Grey, his eyes, compressed with those wrinkles with which near-sighted people assist their vision, scrutinised us each with a piercing glance under his black eyebrows. It was a face at once intellectual, mean, and intimidating.

"Walking; nothing like walking, in moderation. You have boating here also, and you drive, of course; which do you like best, Miss Ware?" The stranger spoke with a slightly foreign accent, and, though he smiled, with a harsh and rapid utterance.

I forget how I answered this, his first question—rather an odd one. He turned and walked a little way with us.

"Charming country. Heavenly weather. But you must find it rather lonely, living down here. How you must both long for a week in London!"

"For my part, I like this better," I answered. "I don't like London in Summer, even in Winter I prefer this."

"You have lived here with people you like, I dare say, and for their sakes you love the place?" he mused.

We walked on a little in silence. His words recalled darling Nelly. This was our favourite walk long ago; it led to what we called the blackberry wilderness, rich in its proper fruits in the late Autumn, and in May with banks all covered with cowslips and primroses. A sudden thought, that finds simple associations near, is affecting, and my eyes filled with tears. But with an effort I restrained them. The presence of a stranger, the sense of publicity, seals those fountains. How seldom people cry at the funerals of their beloved! They go through the public rite like an execution, pale and collected, and return home to break their hearts alone.

"You have been here some months, Miss Grey. You find Miss Ware a very amenable pupil, I venture to believe. I think I know something of physiognomy, and I may con-

gratulate you on a very sweet and docile pupil, eh?"

Laura Grey, governess as she was, looked a little haughtily at this officious gentleman, who, as he put the question, glanced sharply for a moment at her, and then as rapidly at me, as if to see how it told.

"I think—I hope we are very happy together," said Miss Grey. "I can answer for myself."

"Precisely what I expected," said the stranger, taking a pinch of snuff. "I ought to mention that I am a very particular acquaintance, friend I may say, of Mrs. Ware, and am, therefore, privileged."

Mr. Carmel was walking beside his friend in silence, with his eyes apparently lowered to the ground all this time.

My blood was boiling with indignation at being treated as a mere child by this brusque and impertinent old man. He turned to me.

"I see, by your countenance, young lady, that you respect authority. I think your

governess is very fortunate; a dull pupil is a bad bargain, and you are not dull. But a contumacious pupil is utterly intolerable; you are not that, either; you are sweetness and submission itself, eh?"

I felt my cheeks flushing, and I directed on him a glance which, if the fire of ladies' eyes be not altogether a fable, ought at least to have scorched him.

"I have no need of submission, sir. Miss Grey does not think of exercising authority over me. I shall be eighteen my next birthday. I shall be coming out, papa says, in less than a year. I am not treated like a child any longer, sir. I think, Laura, we have walked far enough. Hadn't we better go home? We can take a walk another time—any time would be pleasanter than now."

Without waiting for her answer, I turned, holding my head very high, breathing quickly, and feeling my cheeks in a flame.

The odious stranger, nothing daunted by

my dignified resentment, smiled shrewdly, turned about quite unconcernedly, and continued to walk by my side. On my other side was Laura Grey, who told me afterwards that she greatly enjoyed my spirited treatment of his ill-breeding.

She walked by my side, looking straight before her, as I did. Out of the corners of my eyes I saw the impudent old man marching on as if quite unconscious, or, at least, careless of having given offence. Beyond him I saw, also, in the same oblique way, Mr. Carmel, walking with downcast eyes as before.

He ought to be ashamed, I thought, of having introduced such a person.

I had not time to think a great deal, before the man of the harsh voice and restless eyes suddenly addressed me again.

"You are coming out, you say, Miss Ware, when you are eighteen?"

I made him no answer.

"You are now seventeen, and a year

intervenes," he continued, and turning to Mr. Carmel, "Edwyn, run you down to the house, and tell the man to put my horse to."

So Mr. Carmel crossed the stile at the road-side, and disappeared by the path leading to the stables of Malory. And then turning again to me, the stranger said :

"Suppose your father and mother have placed you in my sole charge, with a direction to remove you from Malory, and take you under my immediate care and supervision, to-day; you will hold yourself in readiness to depart immediately, attended by a lady appointed to look after you, with the approbation of your parents—eh?"

"No, sir, I'll not go. I'll remain with Miss Grey. I'll not leave Malory," I replied, stopping short, and turning towards him. I felt myself growing very pale, but I spoke with resolution.

"You'll not? what, my good young lady, not if I show you your father's letter?"

"Certainly not. Nothing but violence

shall remove me from Malory, until I see papa himself. He certainly would not do anything so cruel!" I exclaimed, while my heart sank within me.

He studied my face for a moment with his dark and fiery eyes.

"You are a spirited young lady; a will of your own!" he said. "Then you won't obey your parents?"

"I'll do as I have said," I answered, inwardly quaking.

He addressed Miss Grey now.

"You'll make her do as she's ordered?" said this man, whose looks seemed to me more sinister every moment.

"I really can't. Besides, in a matter of so much importance, I think she is right not to act without seeing her father, or, at least, hearing directly from him."

"Well, I must take my leave," said he. "And I may as well tell you it is a mere mystification; I have no authority, and no wish to disturb your stay at Malory; and

we are not particularly likely ever to meet again; and you'll forgive an old fellow his joke, young ladies?"

With these brusque and eccentric sentences, he raised his hat, and with the activity of a younger man, ran up the bank at the side of the road; and, on the summit, looked about him for a moment, as if he had forgotten us altogether; and then, at his leisure, he descended at the other side and was quite lost to view.

Laura Grey and I were both staring in the direction in which he had just disappeared. Each, after a time, looked in her companion's face.

"I almost think he's mad!" said Miss Grey.

"What could have possessed Mr. Carmel to introduce such a person to us?" I exclaimed. "Did you hear his name?" I asked, after we had again looked in the direction in which he had gone, without discovering any sign of his return.

"Droqville, I think," she answered.

"Oh! Laura, I am so frightened! Do you think papa can really intend any such thing? He's too kind. I am sure it is a falsehood."

"It is a joke, he says himself," she answered. "I can't help thinking a very odd joke, and very pointless; and one that did not seem to amuse even himself."

"Then you do think it is true?" I urged, my panic returning.

"Well, I can't think it is true, because, if it were, why should he say it was a joke? We shall soon know. Perhaps Mr. Carmel will enlighten us."

"I thought he seemed in awe of that man," I said.

"So did I," answered Miss Grey. "Perhaps he is his superior."

"I'll write to-day to papa, and tell him all about it; you shall help me; and I'll implore of him not to think of anything so horrible and cruel."

Laura Grey stopped short, and laid her hand on my wrist for a moment, thinking.

"Perhaps it would be as well if we were to turn about and walk a little further, so as to give him time to get quite away."

"But if he wants to take me away in that carriage, or whatever it is, he'll wait any time for my return."

"So he would; but the more I think over it, the more persuaded I am that there is nothing in it."

"In any case, I'll go back," I said. "Let us go into the house and lock the doors; and if that odious Mr. Droqville attempts to force his way in, Thomas Jones will knock him down; and we'll send Anne Owen to Cardyllion, for Williams, the policeman. I hate suspense. If there is to be anything unpleasant, it is better to have it decided, one way or other, as soon as possible."

Laura Grey smiled, and spoke merrily of our apprehensions; but I don't think she

was quite so much at ease as she assumed to be.

Thus we turned about, I, at least, with a heart thumping very fast; and we walked back towards the old house of Malory, where, as you have this moment heard, we had made up our minds to stand a siege.

CHAPTER VII.

TASSO.

I DARESAY I was a great fool; but if you had seen the peculiar and unpleasant face of Monsieur Droqville, and heard his harsh nasal voice, in which there was something of habitual scorn, you would make excuses. I confess I was in a great fright by the time we had got well into the dark avenue that leads up to the house.

I hesitated a little as we reached that point in the carriage-road, not a long one, which commands a clear view of the hall-door steps. I had heard awful stories of foolish girls spirited away to convents, and never heard of more. I have doubts as to whether, had I seen Monsieur Droqville or

his carriage there, I should not have turned about, and ran through the trees. But the courtyard in front of the house was, as usual, empty and still. On its gravel surface reposed the sharp shadows of the pointed gables above, and the tufts of grass on its surface had not been bruised by recent carriage wheels. Instead, therefore, of taking to flight, I hurried forward, accompanied by Laura Grey, to seize the fortress before it was actually threatened.

In we ran, lightly, and locked the hall-door, and drew chain and bolt against Monsieur Droqville; and up the great stairs to our room, each infected by the other's panic. Safely in the room, we locked and bolted our door, and stood listening, until we had recovered breath. Then I rang our bell furiously, and up came Anne Owen, or, as her countrymen pronounce it, Anne Wan. There had been, after all, no attack; no human being had attempted to intrude upon our cloistered solitude.

"Where is Mrs. Torkill?" I asked, through the door.

"In the still-room, please, miss."

"Well, you must lock and bolt the back-door, and don't let any one in, either way."

We passed an hour in this state of preparation, and finally ventured downstairs, and saw Rebecca Torkill. From her we learned that the strange gentleman who had been with Mr. Carmel had driven away more than half an hour before; and Laura Grey and I, looking in one another's faces, could not help laughing a little.

Rebecca had overheard a portion of a conversation, which she related to me; but not for years after. At the time she had not an idea that it could refer to any one in whom she was interested; and even at this hour I am not myself absolutely certain, but only conjecture, that I was the subject of their talk. I will tell it to you as nearly as I can recollect.

Rebecca Torkill, nearly an hour before,

being in the still-room, heard voices near the window, and quietly peeped out.

You must know that immediately in the angle formed by the junction of the old house, known as the steward's house, which Mr. Carmel had been assigned for a residence, and the rear of the great house of Malory, stand two or three great trees, and a screen of yews, behind which, so embosomed in ivy as to have the effect of a background of wood, stands the gable of the still-room. This strip of ground, lying immediately in the rear of the steward's house, was a flower-garden; but a part of it is now carpeted with grass, and lies under the shadow of the great trees, and is walled round with the dark evergreens I have mentioned. The rear of the stable-yard of Malory, also mantled with ivy, runs parallel to the back of the steward's house, and forms the other boundary of this little enclosure, which simulates the seclusion of a cloister; and but for the one well-screened

window I have mentioned, would really possess it. Standing near this window she saw Mr. Carmel, whom she always regarded with suspicion, and his visitor, that gentleman in black, whose looks nobody seemed to like.

"I told you, sir," said Mr. Carmel, "through my friend Ambrose, I had arranged to have prayers twice a week, at the church in Paris, for that one soul."

"Yes, yes, yes; that is all very well, very good, of course," answered the hard voice; "but there are things we must do for ourselves—the saints won't shave us, you know."

"I am afraid, sir, I did not quite understand your letter," said Mr. Carmel.

"Yes, you did, pretty well. You see she may be, one day, a very important acquisition. It is time you put your shoulder to the wheel—d'ye see? Put your shoulder to the wheel. The man who said all that is able to do it. So mind you put your shoulder to the wheel forthwith."

The younger man bowed.

"You have been sleeping," said the harsh, peremptory voice. "You said there was enthusiasm and imagination. I take that for granted. I find there is spirit, courage, a strong will; obstinacy—impracticability—no milksop—a bit of a virago! Why did not you make out all that for yourself? To discover character you must apply tests. You ought in a single conversation to know everything."

The young man bowed again.

"You shall write to me weekly; but don't post your letters at Cardyllion. I'll write to you through Hickman, in the old way."

She could hear no more, for they moved away. The elder man continued talking, and looked up at the back-windows of Malory, which became visible as they moved away. It was one of his fierce, rapid glances; but he was satisfied, and continued his conversation for two or three minutes

more. Then he abruptly turned, and entered the steward's house quickly; and, in two or three minutes more, was driving away from Malory at a rapid pace.

A few days after this adventure—for in our life any occurrence that could be talked over for ten minutes was an adventure—I had a letter in mamma's pretty hand, and in it occurred this passage:

"The other day I wrote to Mr. Carmel, and I asked him to do me a kindness. If he would read a little Italian with you, and Miss Grey I am sure would join, I should be so very much pleased. He has passed so much of his life in Rome, and is so accomplished in Italian; simple as people think it, that language is more difficult to pronounce correctly even than French. I forget whether Miss Grey mentioned Italian among the languages she could teach. But however that may be, I think, if Mr. Carmel will take that trouble, it would be very desirable."

Mr. Carmel, however, made no sign. If the injunction to "put his shoulder to the wheel" had been given for my behoof, the promise was but indifferently kept, for I did not see Mr. Carmel again for a fortnight. During the greater part of that interval he was away from Malory, we could not learn where. At the end of that time, one evening, just as unexpectedly as before, he presented himself at the window. Very much the same thing happened. He drank tea with us, and sat on the bench—his bench, he called it—outside the window, and remained, I am sure, two hours, chatting very agreeably. You may be sure we did not lose the opportunity of trying to learn something of the gentleman whom he had introduced to us.

Yes, his name was Droqville.

"We fancied," said Laura, "that he might be an ecclesiastic."

"His being a priest, or not, I am sure you think does not matter much, provided he is

a good man, and he is that; and a very clever man, also," answered Mr. Carmel. "He is a great linguist: he has been in almost every country in the world. I don't think Miss Ethel has been a traveller yet, but you have, I dare say." And in that way he led us quietly away from Monsieur Droqville to Antwerp, and I know not where else.

One result, however, did come of this visit. He actually offered his services to read Italian with us. Not, of course, without opening the way for this by directing our talk upon kindred subjects, and thus deviously up to the point. Miss Grey and I, who knew what each expected, were afraid to look at each other; we should certainly have laughed, while he was leading us up so circuitously and adroitly to his "palpable ambuscade."

We settled Monday, Wednesday, and Friday in each week for our little evening readings. Mr. Carmel did not always now sit outside, upon his bench, as at first. He

was often at our tea-table, like one of ourselves; and sometimes stayed later than he used to do. I thought him quite delightful. He certainly was clever, and, to me, appeared a miracle of learning; he was agreeable, fluent, and very peculiar.

I could not tell whether he was the coldest man on earth, or the most impassioned. His eyes seemed to me more enthusiastic and extraordinary the oftener and longer I beheld them. Their strange effect, instead of losing, seemed to gain by habit and observation. It seemed to me that the cold and melancholy serenity that held us aloof was artificial, and that underneath it could be detected the play and fire of a nature totally different.

I was always fluctuating in my judgment upon this issue; and the problem occupied me during many an hour of meditation.

How dull the alternate days had become; and how pleasant even the look-forward to our little meetings! Thus, very agreeably,

for about a fortnight our readings proceeded, and, one evening on our return, expecting the immediate arrival of our "master," as I called Mr. Carmel, we found, instead, a note addressed to Miss Grey. It began: "Dear Miss Eth," and across these three letters a line was drawn, and "Grey" was supplied. I liked even that evidence that his first thought had been of me. It went on:

"Duty, I regret, calls me for a time away from Malory, and our Italian readings. I have but a minute to write to tell you not to expect me this evening, and to say I regret I am unable, at this moment, to name the day of my return.

"In great haste, and with many regrets,

"Yours very truly,

"E. Carmel."

"So he's gone again!" I said, very much vexed. "What shall we do to-night?"

"Whatever you like best; I don't care—I'm sorry he's gone."

"How restless he is! I wonder why he could not stay quietly here; he can't have any real business away. It may be duty; but it looks very like idleness. I dare say he began to think it a bore coming to us so often to read Tasso, and listen to my nonsense; and I think it a very cool note, don't you?"

"Not cool; a little cold; but not colder than he is," said Laura Grey. "He'll come back, when he has done his business; I'm sure he has business; why should he tell an untruth about the matter?"

I was huffed at his going, and more at his note. That pale face, and those large eyes, I thought the handsomest in the world. I took up one of Laura's manuals of The Controversy, which had fallen rather into disuse after the first panic had subsided, and Mr. Carmel had failed to make any, even the slightest, attack upon our faith. I was fiddling with its leaves, and I said:

"If I were an inexperienced young priest, Laura, I should be horribly afraid of those

little tea-parties. I dare say he is afraid—afraid of your eyes, and of falling in love with you."

"Certainly not with me," she answered. "Perhaps you mean he is afraid of people talking? I think you and I should be the persons to object to that, if there was a possibility of any such thing. But we are talking folly. These men meet us, and talk to us, and we see them; but there is a wall between, that is simply impassable. Suppose a sheet of plate glass, through which you see as clearly as through air, but as thick as the floor of ice on which a Dutch fair is held. That is what their vow is."

"I wonder whether a girl ever fell in love with a priest. That would be a tragedy!" I said.

"A ridiculous one," answered Laura; "you remember the old spinster who fell in love with the Apollo Belvedere? It could happen only to a madwoman."

I think this was a dull evening to Laura Grey; I know it was for me.

CHAPTER VIII.

THUNDER.

WE saw or heard nothing for a week or more of Mr. Carmel. It was possible that he would never return. I was in low spirits. Laura Grey had been shut up by a cold, and on the day of which I am now speaking she had not yet been out. I therefore took my walk alone towards Penruthyn Priory, and, as dejected people not unfrequently do, I was well enough disposed to indulge and even to nurse my melancholy.

A thunder-storm had been for hours moving upwards from the south-east, among the grand ranges of distant mountains that lie, tier beyond tier, at the other side of the

estuary, and now it rested on a wide and lurid canopy of cloud upon the summits of the hills and headlands that overlook the water.

It was evening, later than my usual return to tea. I knew that Laura Grey minded half an hour here or there as little as I did, and a thunder-storm seen and heard from the neighbourhood of Malory is one of the grandest spectacles in its way on earth. Attracted by the mighty hills on the other side, these awful elemental battles seldom visit our comparatively level shore, and we see the lightning no nearer than about half-way across the water. Vivid against blackening sky and purple mountain, the lightning flies and shivers. From broad hill-side, through rocky gorges, reflected and returned from precipice to precipice, through the hollow windings of the mountains, the thunder rolls and rattles, dies away, explodes again, and at length subsides in the strangest and grandest of all sounds, spread-

ing through all that mountainous region for minutes after, like the roar and tremble of an enormous seething caldron.

Suppose these aërial sounds reverberating from cliff to cliff, from peak to peak, and crag to crag, from one hill-side to another, like the cannon in the battles of Milton's angels; suppose the light of the setting sun, through a chink in the black curtain of cloud behind me, touching with misty fire the graves and headstones in the pretty churchyard, where, on the stone bench under the eastern window, I have taken my seat, near the grave of my darling sister; and suppose an uneasy tumult, not a breeze, in the air, sometimes still, and sometimes in moaning gusts, tossing sullenly the boughs of the old trees that darken the churchyard.

For the first time since her death I had now visited this spot without tears. My thoughts of death had ceased to be pathetic, and were, at this moment, simply terrible. "My heart was disquieted within me, and

the fear of death had fallen upon me." I sat with my hands clasped together, and my eyes fixed on the thunderous horizon before me, and the grave of my darling under my eyes, and she, in her coffin, but a few feet beneath. The grave, God's prison, as old Rebecca Torkill used to say, and then the Judgment! This new sense of horror and despair was, I dare say, but an unconscious sympathy with the vengeful and melancholy aspect of nature.

I heard a step near me, and turned. It was Mr. Carmel who approached. He was looking more than usually pale, I thought, and ill. I was surprised, and a little confused. I cannot recall our greeting. I said, after that was over, something, I believe, about the thunder-storm.

"And yet," he answered, "you understand these awful phenomena—their causes. You remember our little talk about electricity—here it is! We know all that is but the restoration of an equilibrium. Think

what it will be when God restores the moral balance, and settles the equities of eternity! There are moods, times, and situations in which we contemplate justly our tremendous Creator. Fear him who, after he has killed the body, has power to cast into hell. Yea, I say unto you, fear him. Here all suffering is transitory. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. This life is the season of time and of mercy; but once in hell, mercy is no more, and eternity opens, and endures, and has no end."

Here he ceased for a time to speak, and looked across the estuary, listening, as it seemed, to the roll and tremble of the thunder. After a little while, he said:

"That you are to die is most certain; nothing more uncertain than the time and manner; by a slow or a sudden death; in a state of grace or of sin. Therefore, we are warned to be ready at all hours. Better twenty years too soon than one moment late; for to perish once is to be lost for

ever. Your death depends upon your life; such as your life is, such will be your death. How can we dare to live in a state that we dare not die in?"

I sat gazing at this young priest, who, sentence after sentence, was striking the very key-note of the awful thought that seemed to peal and glare in the storm. He stood with his head uncovered, his great earnest eyes sometimes raised, sometimes fixed on me, and the uncertain gusts at fitful intervals tossed his hair this way and that. The light of the setting sun touched his thin hand, and his head, and glimmered on the long grass; the graves lay around us; and the voice of God himself seemed to speak in the air.

Mr. Carmel drew nearer, and in the same earnest vein talked on. There was no particle of what is termed the controversial in what he had said. He had not spoken a word that I could not subscribe. He had quoted, also, from our version of the Bible;

but he presented the terrors of revelation with a prominence more tremendous than I was accustomed to, and the tone of his discourse was dismaying.

I will not attempt to recollect and to give you in detail the conversation that followed. He presented, with a savage homeliness of illustration, with the same simplicity and increasing force, the same awful view of Christianity. Beyond the naked strength of the facts, and the terrible brevity with which he stated them in their different aspects, I don't know that there was any special eloquence in his discourse, but, in the language of Scripture, his words made "both my ears tingle."

He did not attempt to combat my Protestant tenets directly; that might have alarmed me; he had too much tact for that. Anything he said with that tendency was in the way simply of a disclosure of the teaching and practice of his own Church.

"In the little volume of legends you

were so good as to say you would like to look into," he said, "you will find the prayer of Saint Louis de Gonzaga; you will also find an anonymous prayer, very pathetic and beautiful. I have drawn a line in red ink down the margin at its side, so it is easily found. These will show you the spirit in which the faithful approach the Blessed Virgin. They may interest you. They will, I am sure, interest your sympathies for those who have suffered, like you, and have found peace and hope in these very prayers."

He then spoke very touchingly of my darling sister, and my tears at last began to flow. It was the strangest half-hour I had ever passed. Religion during that time had appeared in a gigantic and terrible aspect. My grief for my sister was now tinged with terror. Do not we from our Lutheran pulpits too lightly appeal to that potent emotion —fear?

For awhile this tall thin priest in black,

whose pale face and earnest eyes seemed to gleam on me with an intense and almost painful enthusiasm, looked like a spirit in the deepening twilight; the thunder rattled and rolled on among the echoing mountains, the gleam of the lightning grew colder and wilder as the darkness increased, and the winds rushed mournfully, and tossed the churchyard grass, and bowed the heads of the great trees about us; and as I walked home, with my head full of awful thoughts, and my heart agitated, I felt as if I had been talking with a messenger from that other world.

CHAPTER IX.

AWAKENED.

WE do these proselytising priests great wrong when we fancy them cold-blooded practisers upon our credulity, who seek, for merely selfish ends, to entangle us by sophistries, and inveigle us into those mental and moral catacombs from which there is no escape. We underrate their danger when we deny their sincerity. Mr. Carmel sought to save my soul; nobler or purer motive, I am sure, never animated man. If he acted with caution, and even by stratagem, he believed it was in the direct service of Heaven, and for my eternal weal. I know him better, his strength and

his weakness, now—his asceticism, his resolution, his tenderness. That young priest—long dead—stands before me, in the white robe of his purity, king-like. I see him, as I saw him last, his thin, handsome features, the light of patience on his face, the pale smile of suffering and of victory. His tumults and his sorrows are over. Cold and quiet he lies now. My thanks can never reach him; my unavailing blessings and gratitude follow my true and long-lost friend, and tears wrung from a yearning heart.

Laura Grey seemed to have lost her suspicions of this ecclesiastic. We had more of his society than before. Our readings went on, and sometimes he joined us in our walks. I used to see him from an upper window every morning early, busy with spade and trowel, in the tiny flower-garden which belonged to the steward's house. He used to work there for an hour punctually, from before seven till nearly eight. Then

he vanished for many hours, and was not seen till nearly evening, and we had, perhaps, our *Gerusalemme Liberata*, or he would walk with us for a mile or more, and talk in his gentle but cold way, pleasantly, on any topic we happened to start. We three grew to be great friends. I liked to see him when he, and, I may add, Laura Grey also, little thought I was looking at his simple garden-work under the shadow of the grey wall from which the old cherry and rose-trees drooped, in picturesque confusion, under overhanging masses of ivy.

He and I talked as opportunity occurred more and more freely upon religion. But these were like lovers' confidences, and, by a sort of tacit consent, never before Laura Grey. Not that I wished to deceive her; but I knew very well what she would think and say of my imprudence. It would have embarrassed me to tell her; but here remonstrances would not have prevailed; I would not have desisted; we should have

quarrelled; and yet I was often on the point of telling her, for any reserve with her pained me.

In this quiet life we had glided from Summer into Autumn, and suddenly, as before, Mr. Carmel vanished, leaving just such a vague little note as before.

I was more wounded, and a great deal more sorry this time. The solitude I had once loved so well was irksome without him. I could not confess to Laura, scarcely to myself, how much I missed him.

About a week after his disappearance, we had planned to drink tea in the housekeeper's room. I had been sitting at the window in the gable that commanded the view of the steward's garden, which had so often shown me my hermit at his morning's work. The roses were already shedding their honours on the mould, and the sear of Autumn was mellowing the leaves of the old fruit-trees. The shadow of the ancient stone house fell across the garden, for by

this time the sun was low in the west, and I knew that the next morning would come and go, and the next, and bring no sign of his return, and so on, and on, perhaps for ever.

Never was little garden so sad and silent! The fallen leaves lay undisturbed, and the weeds were already peeping here and there among the flowers.

"Is it part of your religion?" I murmured bitterly to myself, as, with folded hands, I stood a little way back, looking down through the open window, "to leave willing listeners thus half-instructed? Business? What is the business of a good priest? I should have thought the care and culture of human souls was, at least, part of a priest's business. I have no one to answer a question now—no one to talk to. I am, I suppose, forgotten."

I dare say there was some affectation in this. But my dejection was far from affected, and hiding my sorrowful and bitter

mood, I left the window and came down the back-stairs to our place of meeting. Rebecca Torkill and Laura Grey were in high chat. Tea being just made, and everything looking so delightfully comfortable, I should have been, at another time, in high spirits.

"Ethel, what do you think? Rebecca has been just telling me that the mystery about Mr. Carmel is quite cleared up. Mr. Prichard, the grocer, in Cardyllion, was visiting his cousin, who has a farm near Plasnwyd, and whom should he see there but our missing friar, in a carriage driving with Mrs. Tredwynyd, of Plasnwyd. She is a beautiful woman still, and one of the richest widows in Wales, Rebecca says; and he has been living there ever since he left this; and his last visit, when we thought he was making a religious sojourn in a monastery, was to the same house and lady! What do you think of that? But it is not near ended yet. Tell the rest of the

story, Mrs. Torkill, to Miss Ethel—please do."

"Well, miss, there's nothin' very particular, only they say all round Plasnwyd that she was in love with him, and that he's goin' to turn Protestant, and it's all settled they're to be married. Every one is singin' to the same tune all round Plasnwyd, and what every one says must be true, as I've often heard say."

I laughed, and asked whether our tea-cake was ready, and looked out of the window. The boughs of the old fruit-trees in the steward's garden hung so near it that the ends of the sprays would tap the glass, if the wind blew. As I leaned against the shutter, drumming a little tune on the window, and looking as careless as any girl could, I felt cold and faint, and my heart was bursting. I don't know what prevented my dropping on the floor in a swoon.

Laura, little dreaming of the effect of this story upon me, was chatting still with

Rebecca, and neither perceived that I was moved by the news.

That night I cried for hours in my bed, after Laura Grey was fast asleep. It never occurred to me to canvass the probability of the story. We are so prone to believe what we either greatly desire or greatly fear. The violence of my own emotions startled me. My eyes were opened at last to a part of my danger.

As I whispered, through convulsive sobs, "He's gone, he's gone—I have lost him—he'll never be here any more! Oh! why did you pretend to take an interest in me? Why did I listen to you? Why did I like you?" All this, and as much more girlish lamentation and upbraiding as you please to fancy, dispelled my dream and startled my reason. I had an interval to recover in; happily for me, this wild fancy had not had time to grow into a more impracticable and dangerous feeling. I felt like an awakened somnambulist at the brink of a precipice.

Had I become attached to Mr. Carmel, my heart must have broken in silence, and my secret have perished with me.

Some weeks passed, and an event occurred, which more than my girlish pride and resolutions turned my thoughts into a new channel, and introduced a memorable actor upon the scene of my life.

CHAPTER X.

A SIGHT FROM THE WINDOWS.

WE were now in stormy October; a fierce and melancholy month! August and September touch the greenwood leaves with gold and russet, and gently loosen the hold of every little stalk on forest bough; and then, when all is ready, October comes on in storm, with sounds of trump and rushing charge and fury not to be argued or dallied with, and thoroughly executes the sentence of mortality that was recorded in the first faint yellow of the leaf, in the still sun of declining July.

October is all the more melancholy for the still, golden days that intervene, and

show the thinned branches in the sunlight, soft, and clear as Summer's, and the boughs cast their skeleton shadows across brown drifts of leaves.

On the evening I am going to speak of, there was a wild, threatening sunset, and the boatmen of Cardyllion foretold a coming storm. Their predictions were verified.

The breeze began to sigh and moan through the trees and chimney-stacks of Malory shortly after sunset, and in another hour it came on to blow a gale from the north-west. From that point the wind sweeps right up the estuary from the open sea; and after it has blown for a time, and the waves have gathered their strength, the sea bursts grandly upon the rocks a little in front of Malory.

We were sitting cosily in our accustomed tea-room. The rush and strain of the wind on the windows became momentarily more vehement, till the storm reached its highest and most tremendous pitch.

"Don't you think," said Laura, after an awful gust, "that the windows may burst in? The wind is frightful! Hadn't we better get to the back of the house?"

"Not the least danger," I answered; "these windows have small panes, and immensely strong sashes; and they have stood so many gales that we may trust them for this."

"There again!" she exclaimed. "How awful!"

"No danger to us, though. These walls are thick, and as firm as rock; not like your flimsy brick houses; and the chimneys are as strong as towers. You must come up with me to the window in the tawny-room; there is an open space in the trees opposite, and we can see pretty well. It is worth looking at; you never saw the sea here in a storm."

With very little persuasion, I induced her to run upstairs with me. Along the corridor, we reached the chamber in question,

and placing our candle near the door, and running together to the window, we saw the grand spectacle we had come to witness.

Over sea and land, rock and wood, a dazzling moon was shining. Tattered bits of cloud, the "scud" I believe they call it, were whirling over us, more swiftly than the flight of a bird, as far as your eye could discern: till the sea was lost in the grey mist of the horizon it was streaked and ridged with white. Nearer to the stooping trees that bowed and quivered in the sustained blast, and the little churchyard dormitory that nothing could disturb, the black peaked rock rose above the turmoil, and a dark causeway of the same jagged stone, sometimes defined enough, sometimes submerged, connected it almost with the mainland. A few hundred yards beyond it, I knew, stretched the awful reef on which the *Intrinsic*, years before I could remember, had been wrecked. Beyond that again, we could see the waves leaping into sheets

of foam, that seemed to fall as slowly and softly as clouds of snow. Nearer, on the dark rock, the waves flew up high into the air, like cannon-smoke.

Within these rocks, which make an awful breakwater, full of mortal peril to ships driving before the storm, the estuary, near the shores of Malory, was comparatively quiet.

At the window, looking on this wild scene, we stood, side by side, in the fascination which the sea in its tumultuous mood never fails to exercise. Thus, not once turning our eyes from the never-flagging variety of the spectacle, we gazed for a full half-hour, when, suddenly, there appeared —was it the hull of a vessel shorn of its masts? No, it was a steamer—a large one, with low chimneys. It seemed to be about a mile and a half away, but was driving on very rapidly. Sometimes the hull was quite lost to sight, and then again rose black and sharp on the crest of the sea. We held

our breaths. Perhaps the vessel was trying to make the shelter of the pier of Cardyllion; perhaps she was simply driving before the wind.

To me there seemed something uncertain and staggering in the progress of the ship. Before her lay the ominous reef, on which many a good ship and brave life had perished. There was quite room enough, I knew, with good steering, between the head of the reef and the sandbank at the other side, to make the pier of Cardyllion. But was there anyone on board who knew the intricate navigation of our dangerous estuary? Could any steering in such a tempest avail? And, above all, had the ship been crippled? In any case, I knew enough to be well aware that she was in danger.

Reader, if you have never witnessed such a spectacle, you cannot conceive the hysterical excitement of that suspense. All those on board are, for the time, your near

friends; your heart is among them—their terrors are yours. A ship driving with just the hand and eye of one man for its only chance, under Heaven, against the fury of sea and wind, and a front of deadly rock, is an unequal battle; the strongest heart sickens as the crisis nears, and the moments pass in an unconscious agony of prayer.

Rebecca Torkill joined us at this moment.

"Oh! Rebecca," I said, "there is a ship coming up the estuary—do you think they can escape?"

"The telescope should be on the shelf at the back stair-head," she answered, as soon as she had taken a long look at the steamer. "Lord ha' mercy on them, poor souls!—that's the very way the *Intrinsic* drove up before the wind the night she was lost; and I think this will be the worse night of the two."

Mrs. Torkill returned with the long sea telescope, in its worn casing of canvas.

I took the first "look out." After wan-

dering hither and thither over a raging sea, and sometimes catching the tossing head of some tree in the foreground, the glass lighted, at length, upon the vessel. It was a large steamer, pitching and yawing frightfully. Even to my inexperienced eye, it appeared nearly unmanageable. I handed the glass to Laura. I felt faint.

Some of the Cardyllion boatmen came running along the road that passes in front of Malory. I saw that two or three of them had already arrived on the rising ground beside the churchyard, and were watching events from that wind-swept point. I knew all the Cardyllion boatmen, for we often employed them, and I said:

"I can't stay here—I must hear what the boatmen say. Come, Laura, come with me."

Laura was willing enough.

"Nonsense! Miss Ethel," exclaimed the housekeeper. "Why, dear Miss Grey, you could not keep hat or bonnet on in a wind

like that! You could not keep your feet in it!"

Remonstrance, however, was in vain. I tied a handkerchief tight over my head and under my chin—Laura did the same; and out we both sallied, notwithstanding Rebecca Torkill's protest and entreaty. We had to go by the back-door; it would have been impossible to close the hall-door against such a gale.

Now we were out in the bright moonlight under the partial shelter of the trees, which bent and swayed with the roar of a cataract over our heads. Near us was the hillock we tried to gain; it was next to impossible to reach it against the storm. Often we were brought to a standstill, and often forced backward, notwithstanding all our efforts.

At length, in spite of all, we stood on the little platform, from which the view of the rocks and sea beyond was clear. Williams, the boatman, was close to me, at my right

hand, holding his low-crowned hat down on his head with his broad, hard hand. Laura was at my other side. Our dresses were slapping and rattling in the storm like the cracking of a thousand whips; and such a roaring was in my ears, although my handkerchief was tied close over them, that I could scarcely hear anything else.

CHAPTER XI.

CATASTROPHE.

THE steamer looked very near now and large. It was plain it had no longer any chance of clearing the rocks. The boatmen were bawling to one another, but I could not understand what they said, nor hear more than a word or two at a time.

The steamer mounted very high, and then seemed to dive headlong into the sea, and was lost to sight. Again, in less than a minute, the black mass was toppling at the summit of the sea, and again it seemed swallowed up.

"Her starboard paddle!" shouted a broad-shouldered sailor in a pilot-coat, with his palm to the side of his mouth.

Thomas Jones was among these men, without a hat, and on seeing me he fell back a little. I was only a step or two behind them.

"Thomas Jones," I screamed, and he inclined his ear to my shrill question, "is there no life-boat in Cardyllion?"

"Not one, miss," he roared; "and it could not make head against that if there was."

"Not an inch," bawled Williams.

"Is there any chance?" I cried.

"An anchor from the starn! A bad hold there—she's draggin' of it!" yelled Williams, whose voice, though little more than two feet away, sounded faint and half smothered in the storm.

Just then the steamer reared, or rather swooped, like the enchanted horse, into the air, and high above its black shape shot a huge canopy of foam; and then it staggered over and down, and nothing but raging sea was there.

"O God! are they all lost?" I shrieked.

"Anchor's fast. All right now," roared the man in the pilot-coat.

In some seconds more the vessel emerged, pitching high into the brilliant moonlight, and nearly the same thing was repeated again and again. The seafaring men who were looking on were shouting their opinions one to another, and from the little I was able to hear and understand, I gathered that she might ride it out if she did not drag her anchor, or "part" or "founder." But the sea was very heavy, and the rocks just under her bows now.

In this state of suspense a quarter of an hour or more must have passed. Suddenly the vessel seemed to rise nearer than before. The men crowded forward to the edge of the bank. It was plain something decisive had happened. Nearer it rose again, and then once more plunged forward and disappeared. I waited breathless. I waited longer than before, and longer. Nothing

was there but rolling waves and springing foam beyond the rocks. The ship rose no more!

The first agony of suspense was over. Where she had been the waves were sporting in the ghastly moonlight. In my wild horror I screamed—I wrung my hands. I could not turn for a moment from the scene. I was praying all the time the same short prayer over and over again. Minute after minute passed, and still my eyes were fixed on the point where the ship had vanished; my hands were clasped over my forehead, and tears welled down my cheeks.

What's that? Upon the summit of the bare rock, all on a sudden, the figure of a man appeared; behind this mass of black stone, as each wave burst in succession, the foam leaped in clouds. For a moment the figure was seen sharp against the silvery distance; then he stooped, as if to climb down the near side of the rock, and we lost sight of him. The boatmen shouted, and

held up each a hand (their others were holding their hats on) in token of succour near, and three or four of them, with Thomas Jones at their head, ran down the slope, at their utmost speed, to the jetty, under which, in shelter, lay the Malory boat. Soon it was moving under the bank, four men pulling might and main against the gale; though they rowed in shelter of the reef, on the pinnacle of which we had seen the figure for a moment, still it was a rough sea, and far from safe for an open boat, the spray driving like hail against them, and the boat pitching heavily in the short cross sea.

No other figure crossed the edge of the rock, or for a moment showed upon the bleak reef, all along which clouds of foam were springing high and wild into the air.

The men who had been watching the event from the bank, seemed to have abandoned all further hope, and began to descend the hill to the jetty to await the return of

the boat. It did return, bearing the one rescued man.

Laura Grey and I went homeward. We made our way into the back-yard, often forced to run, by the storm, in spite of ourselves. We had hardly reached the house when we saw the boatmen coming up.

We were now in the yard, about to enter the house at the back-door, which stood in shelter of the building. I saw Mrs. Torkill in the steward's house, with one of the maids, evidently in a fuss. I ran in.

"Oh, Miss Ethel, dear, did you see that? Lord a' mercy on us! A whole shipful gone like that! I thought the sight was leaving my eyes."

I answered very little. I felt ill, I was trembling still, and ready to burst again into tears.

"Here's bin Thomas Jones, miss, to ask leave for the drownded man to rest himself for the night, and, as Mr. Carmel's away, I knew your papa and mamma would not

refuse; don't you think so, miss? So I said, ay, bring him here. Was I right, miss? And me and Anne Wan is tidyin' a bed for him."

"Quite right, I'm sure," I said, my interest again awakened, and almost at the same moment into the flagged passage came Thomas Jones, followed by several of the Cardyllion boatmen, their great shoes clattering over the flags.

In the front rank of these walked the one mortal who had escaped alive from the ship that was now a wreck on the fatal reef. You may imagine the interest with which I looked at him. I saw a graceful but manly figure, a young man in a short sailor-like coat, his dress drenched and clinging, his hat gone, his forehead and features finely formed, very energetic, and, I thought, stern—browned by the sun; but, allowing for that tint, no drowned face in the sea that night was paler than his, his long black hair, lank with sea-water, thrown back from his face

like a mane. There was blood oozing from under its folds near his temple; there was blood also on his hand, which rested on the breast of his coat; on his finger there was a thick gold ring. I had little more than a moment in which to observe all this. He walked in, holding his head high, very faint and fierce, with a slight stagger in his gait, a sullen and defiant countenance, and eyes fixed and gazing straight before him, as I had heard somnambulists described. I saw him in the candle-light for only a moment, as he walked by, with boatmen in thick shoes, as I said, clattering beside him. I felt a strange longing to run and clasp him by the hand!

I got into our own back-door, and found Laura Grey in the room in which we usually had our tea. She was as much excited as I.

"Could you have imagined," she almost cried, "anything so frightful? I wish I had not seen it. It will always be before my eyes."

"That is what I feel also; but we could not help it, we could not have borne the suspense. That is the reason why people who are least able to bear it sometimes see the most dreadful sights."

As we were talking, and wondering where the steamer came from, and what was her name, and how many people were probably on board, in came Rebecca Torkill.

"I sent them boatmen home, miss, that rowed the boat out to the rock for that poor young man, with a pint o' strong ale, every-one round, and no doubt he'll give them and Thomas Jones something in hand for taking him off the rock when he comes to himself a bit. He ought to be thanking the Almighty with a contrite heart."

"He did not look as if he was going to pray when I saw him," I said.

"Nor to thank God, nor no one, for anything," she chimed in. "And he sat down sulky and black as you please, at the side

o' the bed, and said never a word, but stuck out his foot to Thomas Jones to unbutton his boot. I had a pint o' mulled port ready, and I asked him if I should send for the doctor, and he only shook his head and shrugged his shoulders, as he might turn up his nose at an ugly physic. And he fell a-thinking while Jones was takin' off the other boot, and in place of prayin' or thanksgiving, I heard him muttering to himself and grumbling; and, Lord forgive me if I wrong him, I think I heard him cursing some one. There was a thing for a man just took alive out o' the jaws o' death by the mercy o' God to do! There's them on earth, miss, that no lesson will teach, nor goodness melt, nor judgment frighten, but the last one, and then all's too late."

It was late by this time, and so we all got to our beds. But I lay long awake in the dark, haunted by the ceaseless rocking of that dreadful sea, and the apparition of that one pale, bleeding messenger from the

ship of death. How unlike my idea of the rapture of a mortal just rescued from shipwreck! His face was that of one to whom an atrocious secret has been revealed, who was full of resentment and horror; whose lips were sealed.

In my eyes he was the most striking figure that had ever appeared before me. And the situation and my own dreadful excitement had elevated him into a hero.

CHAPTER XII.

OUR GUEST.

THE first thing I heard of the stranger in the morning was that he had sent off early to the proprietor of the "Verney Arms" a messenger with a note for two large boxes which he had left there, when the yacht *Foam Bell* was at Cardyllion about a fortnight before. The note was signed with the letters R. M.

The *Foam Bell* had lain at anchor off the pier of Cardyllion for only two hours, so no one in the town knew much about her. Two or three of her men, with *Foam Bell* across the breasts of their blue shirts and on the ribbons of their flat glazed hats, had walked

about the quaint town, and drunk their beer at the "George and Garter." But there had not been time to make acquaintance with the townspeople. It was only known that the yacht belonged to Sir Dives Wharton, and that the gentleman who left the boxes in charge of the proprietor of the "Verney Arms," was not that baronet.

The handwriting was the same as that in the memorandum he had left with the hotel-keeper, and which simply told him that the big black boxes were left to be called or written for by Edward Hathaway, and mentioned no person whose initials were R. M. So Mr. Hughes, of the "Verney Arms," drove to Malory to see the gentleman at the steward's house, and having there recognised him as the very gentleman who left the boxes in his charge, he sent them to him as directed.

Shortly after, Doctor Mervyn, our old friend, walked up the avenue, and saw me and Laura at the window.

It was a calm, bright morning; the storm had done its awful work, and was at rest, and sea and sky looked glad and gentle in the brilliant sun. Already about fifty drowned persons had been carried up and laid upon the turf in the churchyard in rows, with their faces upward. I was glad it was upon the slope that was hid from us.

How murderous the dancing waves looked in the sunlight! And the black saw-edged reef I beheld with a start and a shudder. The churchyard, too, had a changed expression. What a spectacle lay behind that familiar grassy curve! I did not see the incongruous muster of death. Here a Liverpool dandy; there a white-whiskered City man; sharp bag-men; little children—strange companions in the churchyard—hard-handed sailors; women, too, in silk or serge—no distinction now.

I and Laura could not walk in that direction till all this direful seeking and finding were over.

The doctor, seeing us at the open window, raised his hat. The Autumn sun through the thin leaves touched his bald head as he walked over to the window-stool, and placing his knee on the bench on which Mr. Carmel used sometimes to sit, he told us all he knew of the ship and the disaster. It was a Liverpool steamer called the *Conway Castle*, bound for Bristol. One of her paddles was disabled early in the gale, and thus she drove to leeward, and was wrecked.

"And now," said the doctor, "I'm going to look in upon the luckiest man in the kingdom, the one human being who escaped alive out of that ship. He must have been either the best or the worst man on board —either too good to be drowned or too bad, by Jove! He is the gentleman you were so kind as to afford shelter to last night in the steward's house there, round the corner, and he sent for me an hour ago. I daresay he feels queer this morning; and

from what Thomas Jones says, I should not be surprised if he had broken a bone somewhere. Nothing of any great consequence, of course; but he must have got a thund'ring fling on those rocks. When I've seen him—if I find you here—I'll tell you what I think of him."

After this promise, you may be sure we did wait where we were, and he kept his word. We were in a fever of curiosity; my first question was, "Who is he?"

"I guessed you'd ask that the first moment you could," said the doctor, a little pettishly.

"Why?" said I.

"Because it is the very question I can't answer," he replied. "But I'll tell you all I do know," he continued, taking up his old position at the window, and leaning forward with his head in the room.

Every word the oracle spoke we devoured. I won't tell his story in his language, nor with our interruptions. I will give its

substance, and in part its details, as I received them. The doctor was at least as curious as we were.

His patient was up, sitting by the fire, in dressing-gown and slippers, which he had taken with other articles of dress from the box which stood open on the floor. The window-curtain was partly drawn, the room rather dark. He saw the young man with his feet on the fender, seated by the wood fire. His features, as they struck the doctor, were handsome and spirited; he looked ill, with pale cheek and lips, speaking low and smiling.

"I'm Doctor Mervyn," said the doctor, making his bow, and eyeing the stranger curiously.

"Oh! Thanks, Doctor Mervyn! I hope it is not a very long way from your house. I am here very ridiculously circumstanced. I should not have had any clothes, if it had not been for a very lucky accident, and for a day or two I shall be totally with-

out money—a mere Robinson Crusoe."

"Oh, that don't matter; I shall be very happy to see after you in the meantime, if there should be anything in my way," answered the doctor, bluntly.

"You are very kind, thanks. This place, they tell me, is called Malory. What Mr. Ware is that to whom it belongs?"

"The Honourable Mr. Ware, brother of Lord H——. He is travelling on the Continent at present with his wife, a great beauty some fifteen years since; and his daughter, his only child, is at present here with her governess."

"Oh, I thought some one said he had two?"

The doctor re-asserted the fact, and for some seconds the stranger looked on the floor abstractedly.

"You wished a word or two of advice, I understand?" interrupted the doctor at length. "You have had a narrow escape, sir—a tremendous escape! You must have

been awfully shaken. I don't know how you escaped being smashed on those nasty rocks."

"I am pretty well smashed, I fancy," said the young man.

"That's just what I wanted to ascertain."

"From head to foot, I'm covered with bruises," continued the stranger; "I got off with very few cuts. I have one over my temple, and half-a-dozen here and there, and one here on my wrist; but you need not take any trouble about them—a cut, when I get one, heals almost of itself. A bit of court-plaster is all I require for them, and Mrs. Something, the housekeeper here, has given me some; but I'm rather seedy. I must have swallowed a lot of salt water, I fancy. I've got off very well, though, if it's true all the other people were drowned. It was a devil of a fluke; you'd say I was the luckiest fellow alive, ha, ha, ha! I wish I could think so."

He laughed, a little bitterly.

"There are very few men glad to meet death when it comes," said Doctor Mervyn. "Some think they are fit to die, and some know they are not. You know best, sir, what reason you have to be thankful."

"I'm nothing but bruises and aches all over my body. I'm by no means well, and I've lost all my luggage, and papers, and money, since one o'clock yesterday, when I was flourishing. Two or three such reasons for thankfulness would inevitably finish me."

"All except you were drowned, sir," said the doctor, who was known in Cardyllion as a serious-minded man, a little severely.

"Like so many rats in a trap, poor devils," acquiesced the stranger. "They were hatched down. I was the only passenger on deck. I must have been drowned if I had been among them."

"All those poor fellow-passengers of yours," said Doctor Mervyn, in disgust, "had souls, sir, to be saved."

"I suppose so; but I never saw such an

assemblage of snobs in my life. I really think that, except poor Haworth—he insisted it would be ever so much pleasanter than the railway; I did not find it so; he's drowned of course—I assure you, except ourselves, there was not a gentleman among them. And Sparks, he's drowned too, and I've lost the best servant I ever had in my life. But I beg your pardon, I'm wasting your time. Do you think I'm ill?"

He extended his wrist, languidly, to enable the doctor to feel his pulse. The physician suppressed his rising answer with an effort, and made his examination.

"Well, sir, you have had a shock."

"By Jove! I should not wonder," acquiesced the young man, with a sneer.

"And you are a good deal upset, and your contusions are more serious than you seem to fancy. I'll make up a liniment here, and I'll send you down something else that will prevent any tendency to fever; and I suppose you would like to be supplied

from the 'Verney Arms.' You must not take any wine stronger than claret for the present, and a light dinner, and if you give me a line, or tell me what name——"

"Oh, they know me there, thanks. I got these boxes from there this morning, and they are to send me everything I require."

The doctor wanted his name. The town of Cardyllion, which was in a ferment, wanted it. Of course he must have the name; a medical practitioner who kept a ledger and sent out accounts, it was part of his business to know his patients' names. How could he stand before the wags of the news-room, if he did not know the name of his own patients—of this one, of all others.

"Oh! put me down as R. M. simply," said the young man.

"But wouldn't it be more—more usual, if you had no objections—a little more at length?" insinuated the doctor.

"Well, yes; put it down a little more at

length—say R. R. M. Three letters instead of two."

The doctor, with his head inclined, laughed patiently, and the stranger, seeing him about to return to the attack, said a little petulantly: "You see, doctor, I'm not going to give my very insignificant name here to any one. If your book-keeper had it, everyone in the town would know it; and Cardyllion is a place at which idle people turn up, and I have no wish to have my stray friends come up to this place to bother me for the two or three days I must stay here. You may suppose me an escaped convict, or anything else you please that will amuse the good people; but I'm hanged if I give my name, thank you!"

After this little interruption, the strictly professional conversation was resumed, and the doctor ended by directing him to stay quiet that day, and not to attempt to walk out until he had seen him again next morning.

The doctor then began to mix the ingredients of his liniment. The young man in the silk dressing-gown limped to the window, and leaned his arm upon the sash, looking out, and the doctor observed him, in his ruminations, smiling darkly on the ivy that nodded from the opposite wall, as if he saw a confederate eyeing him from its shadow.

"He didn't think I was looking at him," said the doctor; "but I have great faith in a man's smile when he thinks he is all to himself; and that smile I did not like; it was, in my mind, enough to damn him."

All this, when his interview was over, the doctor came round and told us. He was by no means pleased with his patient, and being a religious man, of a quick temper, would very likely have declined the office of physician in this particular case, if he had not thought, judging by his "properties," which were in a certain style that impressed Doctor Mervyn, and his air, and

his refined features, and a sort of indescribable superiority which both irritated and awed the doctor, that he might be a "swell."

He went the length, notwithstanding, of calling him, in his conversation with us, an "inhuman puppy," but he remarked that there were certain duties which no Christian could shirk, among which that of visiting the sick held, of course, in the doctor's mind, due rank.

CHAPTER XIII.

MEETING IN THE GARDEN.

I WAS a little shy, as country misses are; and, curious as I was, rather relieved when I heard that the shipwrecked stranger had been ordered to keep his quarters strictly, for that day at least. So, by-and-by, as Laura Grey had a letter to write, I put on my hat, and not caring to walk towards the town, and not daring to take the Penruthyn Road, I ran out to the garden. The garden of Malory is one of those monastic enclosures whose fruit-trees have long grown into venerable timber; whose walls are stained by time, and mantled in some places with ivy; where every-

thing has been allowed, time out of mind, to have its own way; where walks are grass-grown, and weeds choke the intervals between old standard pear, and cherry, and apple-tree, sand only a little plot of ground is kept in cultivation by a dawdling, desultory man, who carries in his daily basket of vegetables to the cook. There was a really good Ribston-pippin or two in this untidy, but not unpicturesque garden; and these trees were, I need scarcely tell you, a favourite resort of ours.

The gale had nearly stripped the trees of their ruddy honours, and thrifty Thomas Jones had, no doubt, carried the spoil away to store them in the apple-closet. One pippin only dangled still within reach, and I was whacking at this particularly good-looking apple with a long stick, but as yet in vain, when I suddenly perceived that a young man, whom I recognised as the very hero of the shipwreck, was approaching. He walked slowly and a little lame, and was leaning on

a stick. He was smiling, and, detected in my undignified and rather greedy exercise —I had been jumping from the ground—I was ready to sink into the earth with shame. Perhaps, if I had been endowed with presence of mind, I should have walked away. But I was not, on that occasion at least; and I stood my ground, stick in hand, affecting not to see his slow advance.

It was a soft sunny day. He had come out without a hat; he had sent to Cardyllion to procure one, and had not yet got it, as he afterwards told me, with an apology for seeming to make himself so very much at home. How he introduced himself I forget; I was embarrassed and disconcerted; I know that he thanked me very much for my "hospitality," called me his "hostess," smiling, and told me that, although he did not know my father, he yet saw him everywhere during the season. Then he talked of the wreck; he described his own adventures very interestingly, and spoke of the

whole thing in terms very different from those reported by Doctor Mervyn, and with a great deal of feeling. He asked me if I had seen anything of it from our house; and then it became my turn to speak. I very soon got over my shyness; he was so perfectly well-bred that it was impossible, even for a rustic such as I was, not to feel very soon quite at her ease in his company.

So I talked away, becoming more animated; and he smiled, looking at me, I thought, with a great deal of sympathy, and very much pleased. I thought him very handsome. He had one point of resemblance to Mr. Carmel. His face was pale, but, unlike his, as dark as a gipsy's. Its tint showed the white of his eyes and his teeth with fierce effect. What was the character of the face I saw now? Very different from the death-like phantom that had crossed my sight the night before. It was a face of passion and daring. A broad, low forehead, and resolute mouth, with that

pronounced under-jaw which indicates sternness and decision. I contrasted him secretly with Mr. Carmel. But in his finely-cut features, and dark, fierce eyes, the ascetic and noble interest of the sadder face was wanting; but there was, for so young a person as I, a different and a more powerful fascination in the beauty of this young man of the world.

Before we parted I allowed him to knock down the apple I had been trying at, and this rustic service improved our acquaintance.

I began to think, however, that our interview had lasted quite long enough; so I took my leave, and I am certain he would have accompanied me to the house, had I not taken advantage of his lameness, and walked away very quickly.

As I let myself out at the garden-door, in turning I was able, unsuspected, to steal a parting look, and I saw him watching me intently as he leaned against the stem of a gigantic old pear-tree. It was rather plea-

sant to my vanity to think that I had made a favourable impression upon the interesting stranger.

Next day our guest met me again, near the gate of the avenue, as I was returning to the house.

"I had a call this morning from your clergyman," he said. "He seems a very kind old gentleman, the rector of Cardyllion; and the day is so beautiful, he proposed a sail upon the estuary, and if you were satisfied with him, by way of escort, and my steering—I'm an old sailor—I'm sure you'd find it just the day to enjoy a little boating."

He looked at me, smiling eagerly.

Laura Grey and I had agreed that nothing would tempt us to go upon the water, until all risk of lighting upon one of those horrible discoveries from the wreck, that were now beginning to come to the surface from hour to hour, was quite over. So I made our excuses as best I could, and told

him that since the storm we had a horror of sailing. He looked vexed and gloomy. He walked beside me.

"Oh! I understand—Miss Grey? I was not aware—I ought, of course, to have included her. Perhaps your friend would change her mind and induce you to reconsider your decision. It is such a charming day."

I thanked him again, but our going was quite out of the question. He smiled and bowed a little, but looked very much chagrined. I fancied that he thought I meant to snub him, for proposing any such thing on so very slight an acquaintance. I daresay if I had I should have been quite right; but you must remember how young I was, and how unlearned in the world's ways. Nothing, in fact, was further from my intention. To soften matters a little, I said:

"I am very sorry we can't go. We should have liked it, I am sure, so much; but it is quite impossible."

He walked all the way to the hall-door with me; and then he asked if I did not intend continuing my walk a little. I bid him good-bye, however, and went in, very full of the agreeable idea that I had made a conquest.

Laura Grey and I, walking to Cardyllion later, met Doctor Mervyn, who stopped to tell us that he had just seen his Malory patient, "R. R. M.," steering Williams's boat, with the old vicar on board.

"By Jove! one would have fancied he had got enough of the water for some time to come," remarked the doctor, in conclusion. "That is the most restless creature I ever encountered in all my professional experience! If he had kept himself quiet yesterday and to-day, he'd have been pretty nearly right by to-morrow; but if he goes on like this I should not wonder if he worked himself into a fever."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE INTRUDER.

NEXT morning, at about nine o'clock, whom do I see but the restless stranger, to my surprise, again upon the avenue as I return towards the house. I had run down to the gate before breakfast to meet our messenger, and learn whether any letters had come by the post. He, like myself, has come out before his breakfast. He turns on meeting me, and walks towards the house at my side. Never was man more persistent. He had got Williams's boat again, and not only the vicar, but the vicar's wife, was coming for a sail; surely I would venture with her? I was to remember,

besides, that they were to sail to the side of the estuary furthest from the wreck; there could be no possible danger there of what I feared—and thus he continued to argue and entreat.

I really wished to go. I said, however, that I must ask Miss Grey, whom, upon some excuse which I now forget, he regretted very much he could not invite to come also. I had given him a conditional promise by the time we parted at the hall-door, and Laura saw no objection to my keeping it, provided old Mrs. Jermyn, the vicar's wife, were there to chaperon me. We were to embark from the Malory jetty, and she was to call for me at about three o'clock.

The shipwrecked stranger left me, evidently very well pleased. When he got into his quarters in the steward's house and found himself alone, I dare say his dark face gleamed with the smile of which Doctor Mervyn had formed so ill an opinion. I had not yet seen that smile. Heaven help

me! I have had reason to remember it.

Laura and I were sitting together, when who should enter the room but Mr. Carmel. I stood up and shook hands. I felt very strangely. I was glad the room was a dark one. I was less observed, and therefore less embarrassed.

It was not till he had been in the room some time that I observed how agitated he looked. He seemed also very much dejected, and from time to time sighed heavily. I saw that something had gone strangely wrong. It was a vague suspense. I was secretly very much frightened.

He would not sit down. He said he had not a moment to stay; and yet he lingered on, I fancied, debating something within himself. He was distrait, and, I thought, irresolute.

After a little talk he said,

"I came just to look in on my old quarters and see my old friends for a few minutes, and then I must disappear again for

more than a month, and I find a gentleman in possession."

We hastened to assure him that we had not expected him home for some time, and that the stranger was admitted but for a few days. We told him, each contributing something to the narrative, all about the shipwreck, and the reception of the forlorn survivor in the steward's house.

He listened without a word of comment, almost without breathing, and with his eyes fixed in deep attention on the floor.

"Has he made your acquaintance?" he asked, raising them to me.

"He introduced himself to me," I answered, "but Miss Grey has not seen him."

Something seemed to weigh heavily upon his mind.

"What is your father's present address?" he asked.

I told him, and he made a note of it in his pocket-book. He stood up now, and did at length take his leave.

"I am going to ask you to do a very kind thing. You have heard of sealed orders, not to be opened till a certain point has been reached in a voyage or a march? Will you promise, until I shall have left you fully five minutes, not to open this letter?"

I almost thought he was jesting, but I perceived very quickly that he was perfectly serious. Laura Grey looked at him curiously, and gave him the desired promise as she received the note. His carriage was at the door, and in another minute he was driving rapidly down the avenue. What had led to these odd precautions?—and what had they to do with the shipwrecked stranger?

At about eleven o'clock—that is to say, about ten minutes before Mr. Carmel's visit to us—the stranger had been lying on a sofa in his quarters, with two ancient and battered novels from Austin's Library in Cardyllion, when the door opened unceremoniously, and Mr. Carmel, in travelling costume, stepped into the room. The hall-door

was standing open, and Mr. Carmel, on alighting from his conveyance, had walked straight in without encountering anyone in the hall. On seeing an intruder in possession he stopped short; the gentleman on the sofa, interrupted, turned towards the door. Thus confronted, each stared at the other.

"Ha! Marston," exclaimed the ecclesiastic, with a startled frown, and an almost incredulous stare.

"Edwyn! by Jove!" responded the stranger, with a rather anxious smile, which faded, however, in a moment.

"What on earth brings you here?" said Mr. Carmel, sternly, after a silence of some seconds.

"What the devil brings you here?" inquired the stranger, almost at the same moment. "Who sent you? What is the meaning of it?"

Mr. Carmel did not approach him. He stood where he had first seen him, and his looks darkened.

"You are the last man living I should have looked for here," said he.

"I suppose we shall find out what we mean by-and-by," said Marston, cynically; "at present I can only tell you that when I saw you I honestly thought a certain old gentleman, I don't mean the devil, had sent you in search of me."

Carmel looked hard at him. "I've grown a very dull man since I last saw you, and I don't understand a joke as well as I once did," said he; "but if you are serious you cannot have learnt that this house has been lent to me by Mr. Ware, its owner, for some months at least; and these, I suppose, are your things? There is not room to put you up here."

"I didn't want to come. I am the famous man you may have read of in the papers—quite unique—the man who escaped alive from the *Conway Castle*. No Christian refuses shelter to the shipwrecked; and you are a Christian, though an odd one."

Edwyn Carmel looked at him for some seconds in silence.

"I am still puzzled," he said. "I don't know whether you are serious; but, in any case, there's a good hotel in the town—you can go there."

"Thank you—without a shilling," laughed the young man, a little wickedly.

"A word from me will secure you credit there."

"But I'm in the doctor's hands, don't you see?"

"It is nothing very bad," answered Mr. Carmel; "and you will be nearer the doctor there."

The stranger, sitting up straight, replied,

"I suppose I shall; but the doctor likes a walk, and I don't wish him a bit nearer."

"But this is, for the time being, my house, and you must go," replied Edwyn Carmel, coldly and firmly.

"It is also my house, for the time being;

for Miss Ware has given me leave to stay here."

The ecclesiastic's lips trembled, and his pale face grew paler, as he stared on the young man for a second or two in silence.

"Marston," he said, "I don't know, of all men, why you should specially desire to pain me."

"Why, hang it! Why should I wish to pain you, Edwyn? I don't. But I have no notion of this sort of hectoring. The idea of your turning me out of the—my house—the house they have lent me! I told you I didn't want to come here; and now I don't want to go away, and I won't."

The churchman looked at him, as if he strove to read his inmost thoughts.

"You know that your going to the hotel could involve no imaginable trouble," urged Edwyn Carmel.

"Go to the hotel yourself, if you think it so desirable a place. I am satisfied with this, and I shall stay here."

"What can be the motive of your obstinacy?"

"Ask that question of yourself, Mr. Carmel, and you may possibly obtain an answer," replied the stranger.

The priest looked again at him, in stern doubt.

"I don't understand your meaning," he said, at last.

"I thought my meaning pretty plain. I mean that I rather think our motives are identical."

"Honestly, Marston, I don't understand you," said Mr. Carmel, after another pause.

"Well, it is simply this: that I think Miss Ware a very interesting young lady, and I like being near her—don't you?"

The ecclesiastic flushed crimson; Marston laughed contemptuously.

"I have been away for more than a month," said the priest, a little paler, looking up angrily; "and I leave this to-day for as long a time again."

"Conscious weakness! Weakness of that sentimental kind sometimes runs in families," said the stranger, with a sneer. It was plain that the stranger was very angry; the taunt was wicked, and, whatever it meant, stung Mr. Carmel visibly. He trembled, with a momentary quiver, as if a nerve had been pierced.

There was a silence, during which Mr. Carmel's little French clock over the chimney-piece, punctually wound every week by old Rebecca, might be heard sharply tick, tick, ticking.

"I shall not be deterred by your cruel tongue," said he, very quietly, at length, with something like a sob, "from doing my duty."

"Your duty! Of course, it is always duty; jealousy is quite unknown to a man in holy orders. But there is a difference. You can't tell me the least what I'm thinking of; you always suppose the worst of every one. Your duty! And what, pray, is your duty?"

"To warn Miss Ware and her governess," he answered promptly.

"Warn her of what?" said the stranger, sternly.

"Warn her that a villain has got into this house."

The interesting guest sprang to his feet, with his fists clenched. But he did not strike. He hesitated, and then he said,

"Look here; I'll not treat you as I would a man. You wish me to strike you, you Jesuit, and to get myself into hot water. But I shan't make a fool of myself. I tell you what I'll do with you—if you dare to injure me in the opinion of any living creature, by one word of spoken or hinted slander, I'll make it a police-office affair; and I'll bring out the whole story you found it on; and we'll see which suffers most, you or I, when the world hears it. And now, Mr. Carmel, you're warned. And you know I'm a fellow that means what he says."

Mr. Carmel turned with a pale face, and left the room.

I wonder what the stranger thought. I have often pondered over that scene; and, I believe, he really thought that Mr. Carmel would not, on reflection, venture to carry out his threat.

CHAPTER XV.

A WARNING.

WE had heard nothing of Mr. Carmel's arrival. He had not passed our windows, but drove up instead by the back avenue; and now he was gone, and there remained no record of his visit but the letter which Laura held in her fingers, while we both examined it on all sides, and turned it over. It was directed, "To Miss Ware and Miss Grey. Malory." And when we opened it we read these words:

"Dear Young Ladies,—I know a great deal of the gentleman who has been permitted to take up his residence in the house adjoining Malory. It is enough for me to

assure you that no acquaintance could be much more objectionable and unsafe, especially for young ladies living alone as you do. You cannot, therefore, exercise too much caution in repelling any advances he may make.

"Your true friend,

"E. CARMEL."

The shock of reading these few words prevented my speaking for some seconds. I had perfect confidence in Mr. Carmel's warning. I was very much frightened. And the vagueness of his language made it the more alarming. The same thoughts struck us both. What fools we were! How is he to be got out of the house? Whom have we to advise with? What is to be done?

In our first panic we fancied that we had got a burglar or an assassin under our roof. Mr. Carmel's letter, however, on consideration, did not bear out quite so violent a

conclusion. We resolved, of course, to act upon that letter; and I blamed myself too late for having permitted the stranger to make, even in so slight a way, my acquaintance.

In great trepidation, I despatched a note to Mrs. Jermyn, to say I could not join her boating party. To the stranger I could send neither note nor message. It did not matter. He would, of course, meet that lady at the jetty, and there learn my resolve. Two o'clock arrived. Old Rebecca came in, and told us that the gentleman in the steward's house had asked her whether Mr. Carmel was gone; and on learning that he had actually driven away, hardly waited till she was out of the room "to burst out a-laughing," and talking to himself, and laughing like mad.

"And I don't think, with his laughing and cursing, he's like a man should be that fears God, and is only a day or two out of the jaws of death!"

This description increased our nervousness. Possibly this person was a lunatic, whose keeper had been drowned in the *Conway Castle.* There was no solution of the riddle which Mr. Carmel had left us to read, however preposterous, that we did not try; none possible, that was not alarming.

About an hour after, passing through the hall, I saw some one, I thought, standing outside, near the window that commands the steps beside the door. This window has a wire-blind, through which, from outside, it is impossible to see. From within, however, looking towards the light, you can see perfectly. I scarcely thought our now distrusted guest would presume to approach our door so nearly; but there he was. He had mounted the steps, I suppose, with the intention of knocking, but he was, instead, looking stealthily from behind the great elm that grows close beside; his hand was leaning upon its trunk, and his whole attention absorbed in watching some

object, which, judging from the direction of his gaze, must have been moving upon the avenue. I could not take my eyes off him. He was frowning, with compressed lips and eyes dilated; his attitude betokened caution, and as I looked he smiled darkly.

I recovered my self-possession. I took, directly, Doctor Mervyn's view of that very peculiar smile. I was suddenly frightened. There was nothing to prevent the formidable stranger from turning the handle of the door and letting himself into the hall. Two or three light steps brought me to the door, and I instantly bolted it. Then drawing back a little into the hall, I looked again through the window, but the intending visitor was gone.

Who had occupied his gaze the moment before? And what had determined his retreat? It flashed upon me suddenly again that he might be one of those persons who are described as "being known to the police," and that Mr. Carmel

had possibly sent constables to arrest him.

I waited breathlessly at the window, to see what would come of it. In a minute more, from the direction in which I had been looking for a party of burly policemen, there arrived only my fragile friend, Laura Grey, who had walked down the road to see whether Mr. and Mrs. Jermyn were coming.

Encouraged by this reinforcement, I instantly opened the hall-door, and looked boldly out. The enemy had completely disappeared.

"Did you see him?" I exclaimed.

"See whom?" she asked.

"Come in quickly," I answered. And when I had shut the hall-door, and again bolted it, I continued, "The man in the steward's house. He was on the steps this moment."

"No, I did not see him; but I was not looking towards the hall-door. I was looking up at the trees, counting the broken

boughs—there are thirteen trees injured on the right side, as you come up."

"Well, I vote we keep the door bolted; he shan't come in here," said I. "This is the second siege you and I have stood together in this house. I do wish Mr. Carmel had been a little more communicative, but I scarcely think he would have been so unfriendly as to leave us quite to ourselves if he had thought him a highwayman, and certainly, if he is one, he is a very gentleman-like robber."

"I think he can merely have meant, as he says, to warn us against making his acquaintance," said Miss Grey; "his letter says only that."

"I wish Mr. Carmel would stay about home," I said, "or else that the steward's house were locked up."

I suppose all went right about the boating party, and that Mrs. Jermyn got my note in good time.

No one called at Malory; the dubious

stranger did not invade our steps again. We had constant intelligence of his movements from Rebecca Torkill; and there was nothing eccentric or suspicious about them, so far as we could learn.

Another evening passed, and another morning came; no letter by the post, Rebecca hastened to tell us, for our involuntary guest; a certain sign, she conjectured, that we were to have him for another day. Till money arrived he could not, it was plain, resume his journey.

Doctor Mervyn told us, with his customary accuracy and plenitude of information respecting other people's affairs, when he looked in upon us, after his visit to his patient, that he had posted a letter the morning after his arrival, addressed to Lemuel Blount, Esquire, 5, Brunton Street, Regent's Park; and that on reference to the London Directory, in the news-room, it was duly ascertained by the subscribers that "Blount, Lemuel," was simply entered

as "Esquire," without any further clue whatsoever to guide an active-minded and inquiring community to a conclusion. So there, for the present, Doctor Mervyn's story ended.

Our panic by this time was very much allayed. The unobtrusive conduct of the unknown, ever since his momentary approach to our side of the house, had greatly contributed to this. I could not submit to a blockade of any duration; so we took heart of grace, and ventured to drive in the little carriage to Cardyllion, where we had some shopping to do.

CHAPTER XVI.

DOUBTS.

I HAVE been searching all this morning in vain for a sheet of written note paper, almost grown yellow by time when I last saw it. It contains three stanzas of very pretty poetry. At least I once thought so. I was curious to try, after so many years, what I should think of them now. Possibly they were not even original, though there certainly was no lack in the writer of that sort of cleverness which produces pretty verses.

I must tell you how I came by them. I found that afternoon a note, on the window-stool in our tea-room, addressed "Miss Ethel."

Laura Grey did not happen to be in the room at the moment. There might have been some debate on the propriety of opening the note if she had been present. I could have no doubt that it came from our guest, and I opened and read it instantly.

In our few interviews I had discovered, once or twice, a scarcely disguised tenderness in the stranger's tones and looks. A very young girl is always pleased, though ever so secretly, with this sort of incense. I know I was. It is a thing hard to give up; and, after all, what was Mr. Carmel likely to know about this young man?—and if he did not know him, what were the canons of criticism he was likely to apply? And whatever the stranger might be, he talked and looked like a gentleman; he was unfortunate, and for the present dependent, I romantically thought, on our kindness. To have received a copy of verses was very pleasant to my girlish self-importance; and the flattery of the lines themselves was charming.

The first shock of Mr. Carmel's warning had evaporated by this time; and I was already beginning to explain away his note. I hid the paper carefully. I loved Laura Grey; but I had, in my inmost soul, a secret awe of her; I knew how peremptory would be her advice, and I said not a word about the verses to her. At the first distant approach of an affair of the heart, how cautious and reserved we grow, and in most girls how suddenly the change from kittens to cats sets in! It was plain he had no notion of shifting his quarters to the hotel. But a little before our early tea-hour, Rebecca Torkill came in and told us what might well account for his not having yet gone to Cardyllion.

"That poor young man," she said, "he's very bad. He's lying on his back, with a handkercher full of eau-de-Cologne on his forehead, and he's sent down to the town for chloroform, and a blister for the back of his neck. He called me in, and indeed, though his talk and his behaviour might well

be improved, considering how near he has just bin to death, yet I could not but pity him. Says he, 'Mrs. Torkill, for heaven's sake don't shake the floor, step as light as you can, and close the shutter next the sun,' which I did; and says he, 'I'm in a bad way; I may die before morning. My doctor in town tells me these headaches are very dangerous. They come from the spine.' 'Won't you see Doctor Mervyn, please, sir?' say I. 'Not I,' says he. 'I know all about it better than he'—them were his words—'and if the things that's coming don't set me to rights, I'm a gone man.' And indeed he groaned as he might at parting of soul and body—and here's a nice kettle o' fish, if he should die here, poor, foolish young man, and we not knowing so much as where his people lives, nor even his name. 'Tis a mysterious thing o' Providence to do. I can't see how 'twas worth while saving him from drowning, only to bring him here to die of that head-

ache. But all works together, we know. Thomas Jones is away down at the ferry; a nice thing, among a parcel o' women, a strange gentleman dying on a sofa, and not a man in the house! What do you think is best to be done, Miss Grey?"

"If he grows worse, I think you should send for the doctor without asking his leave," she answered. "If it is dangerous, it would not do to have no advice. It is very unlucky."

"Well, it is what I was thinking myself," said the housekeeper; "folks would be talking, as if we let him die without help. I'll keep the boiler full in case he should want a bath. He said his skull was fractured once, where that mark is, near his temple, and that the wound has something to do with it, and by evil chance, it was just there he got the knock in the wreck of the *Conway Castle;* the Lord be good to us all!"

So Mrs. Torkill fussed out of the room, leaving us rather uncomfortable; but Laura

Grey, at least, was not sorry, although she did not like the cause, that there was no reason to apprehend his venturing out that evening.

Our early tea-things came in. A glowing Autumn sunset was declining; the birds were singing their farewell chorus from thick ivy over branch and wall, and Laura and I, each with her own secret, were discussing the chances of the stranger's illness, with exaggerated despondency and alarm. Our talk was interrupted. Through the window, which, the evening being warm, we, secure from intrusion, had left open, we heard a clear manly voice address us as "Miss Ethel and Miss Grey."

Could it be Mr. Carmel come back again? Good Heavens! no; it was the stranger in Mr. Carmel's place, as we had grown to call it. The same window, his hands, it seemed, resting on the very same spot on the window-stone, and his knee, just as Mr. Carmel used to place his, on the

stone bench. I had no idea before how stern the stranger's face was; the contrast between the features I had for a moment expected, and those of our guest, revealed the character of his with a force assisted by the misty red beam that glanced on it, with a fierce melancholy, through the trees.

His appearance was as unexpected as if he had been a ghost. It came in the midst of a discussion as to what should be done if, by ill chance, he should die in the steward's house. I can't say how Laura Grey felt; I only know that I stared at his smiling face for some seconds, scarcely knowing whether the apparition was a reality or not.

"I hope you will forgive me; I hope I am not very impertinent; but I have just got up from an astounding headache all right again; and, in consequence, in such spirits, that I never thought how audacious I was in venturing this little visit until it was too late."

Miss Grey and I were both too much confounded to say a word. But he rattled on: "I have had a visitor since you were so good as to give me shelter in my shipwrecked state—one quite unexpected. I don't mean my doctor, of course. I had a call to-day much more curious, and wholly unlooked for; an old acquaintance, a fellow named Carmel. I knew him at Oxford, and I certainly never expected to see him again."

"Oh! You know Mr. Carmel?" I said, my curiosity overcoming a kind of reluctance to talk.

"Know him? I rather think I do," he laughed. "Do you know him?"

"Yes," I answered; "that is, not very well; there is, of course, a little formality in our acquaintance—more, I mean, than if he were not a clergyman."

"But do you really know him? I fancied he was boasting when he said so." The

gentleman appeared extremely amused.

"Yes; we know him pretty well. But why should it be so unlikely a thing our knowing him?"

"Oh, I did not say that." He still seemed as much amused as a man can quietly be. "But I certainly had not the least idea I should ever see him again, for he owes me a little money. He owes me money, and a grudge besides. There are some men you cannot know anything about without their hating you—that is, without their being afraid of you, which is the same thing. I unluckily heard something about him—quite accidentally, I give you my honour, for I certainly never had the pleasure of knowing him intimately. I don't think he would exactly come to me for a character. I had not an idea that he could be the Mr. Carmel who, they told me, had been permitted by Mr. Ware to reside in his house. I was a good deal surprised when I made the discovery. There can't

have been, of course, any inquiry. I should not, I assure you, have spoken to Mr. Carmel had I met him anywhere else; but I could not help telling him how astonished I was at finding him established here. He begged very hard that I would not make a fuss about it, and said that he was going away, and that he would not wait even to take off his hat. So, if that is true, I shan't trouble anyone about him. Mr. Ware would naturally think me very impertinent if I were to interfere."

He now went on to less uncomfortable subjects, and talked very pleasantly. I could see Laura Grey looking at him as opportunity occurred; she was a good deal further in the shade than I and he. I fancied I saw him smile to himself, amused at baffling her curiosity, and he sat back a little further.

"I am quite sorry, Miss Ware," he said, "that I am about to be in funds again. My friends by this time must be weaving my

wings—those wings of tissue-paper that come by the post, and take us anywhere. I'm awfully sorry, for I've fallen in love with this place. I shall never forget it." He said these latter words in a tone so low as to reach me only. I was sitting, as I mentioned, very much nearer the window than Laura Grey.

There was in this stranger for me—a country miss, quite inexperienced in the subtle flatteries of voice, manner, looks, which town-bred young ladies accept at their true value—a fascination before which suspicions and alarms melted away. His voice was low and sweet; he was animated, good-humoured, and playful; and his features, though singular, and capable of very grim expression, were handsome.

He talked to me in the same low tone for a few minutes. Happening to look at Laura Grey, I was struck by the anger expressed in her usually serene and gentle face. I fancied that she was vexed at his directing

his attentions exclusively to me, and I was rather pleased at my triumph.

"Ethel, dear," she said, "don't you think the air a little cold?"

"Oh, I so very much hope not," he almost whispered to me.

"Cold?" said I. "I think it is so very sultry, on the contrary."

"If you find it too cold, Miss Grey, perhaps you would do wisely, I think, to sit a little further from the window," said Mr. Marston, considerately.

"I am not at all afraid for myself," she answered a little pointedly, "but I am uneasy about Miss Ware. I do think, Ethel, you would do wisely to get a little further from that window."

"But I do assure you I am quite comfortable," I said, in perfect good faith.

I saw Mr. Marston glance for a moment with a malicious smile at Laura Grey. To me the significance of that smile was a little puzzling.

"I see you have got a piano there," he said to me, in his low tones, not meant for her ear. "Miss Grey plays, of course?"

"Yes; very well indeed."

"Well, then, would you mind asking her to play something?"

I had no idea at the time that he wanted simply to find occupation for her, and to fill her ears with her own music, while he talked on with me.

"Laura, will you play that pretty thing of Beethoven's that you tried last night?" I asked.

"Don't ask me, Ethel, dear, to-night; I don't think I could," she answered, I thought a little oddly.

"Perhaps, if Miss Grey knew," he said, smiling, "that she would oblige a poor shipwrecked stranger extremely, and bind him to do her any service she pleases to impose in return, she might be induced to comply."

"The more you expect from my playing,

the less courage I have to play," she said, in reply to his appeal, which was made, I fancied, in a tone of faint irony that seemed to suggest an oblique meaning; and her answer, I also fancied, was spoken as if answering that hidden meaning. It was very quietly done, but I felt the singularity of those tones.

"And why so? Do, I entreat—do play."

"Shouldn't I interrupt your conversation?" she answered.

"I'll not allow you even that excuse," he said; "I'll promise (and won't you, Miss Ware?) to talk whenever we feel inclined. There, now, it's all settled, isn't it? Pray begin."

"No, I am not going to play to-night," she said.

"Who would suppose Miss Grey so resolute; so little a friend to harmony? Well, I suppose we can do nothing; we can't prevail; we can only regret."

I looked curiously at Laura, who had

risen, and was approaching the window, close to which she took a chair and sat down.

Mr. Marston was silent. I never saw man look angrier, although he smiled. To his white teeth and vivid eyes his dark skin gave marked effect; and to me, who knew nothing of the situation, the whole affair was most disagreeably perplexing. I was curious to see whether there would be any sign of recognition; but I was sitting at the side that commanded a full view of our guest, and the table so near me that Laura could not have introduced her chair without a very pointed disclosure of her purpose. If Mr. Marston was disposed to snarl and snap at Miss Grey, he very quickly subdued that desire. It would have made a scene, and frightened me, and that would never do.

In his most good-humoured manner, therefore, which speedily succeeded this silent paroxysm, he chatted on, now and then almost whispering a sentence or two to

me. What a contrast this gay, reckless, and, in a disguised way, almost tender talk, presented to the cold, peculiar, but agreeable conversation of the ascetic enthusiast, in whom this dark-faced, animated man of the world had uncomfortably disturbed my faith !

Laura Grey was restless all this time, angry, frightened. I fancied she was jealous and wounded ; and although I was so fond of her, it did not altogether displease me.

The sunlight failed. The reflected glow from the western sky paled into grey, and twilight found our guest still in his place at the window, with his knee on the bench, and his elbows resting on the window-stone, our candles being lighted, chatting, as I thought, quite delightfully, talking sense and nonsense very pleasantly mixed, and hinting a great many very agreeable flatteries.

Laura Grey at length took courage, or panic, which often leads in the same direc-

tion, and rising, said quietly, but a little peremptorily: "I am going now, Ethel."

There was, of course, nothing for it but to submit. I confess I was angry. But it would certainly not have been dignified to show my resentment in Mr. Marston's presence. I therefore acquiesced with careless good-humour. The stranger bid us a reluctant good-night, and Laura shut down the window, and drew the little bolt across the window-sash, with, as it seemed to me, a rather inconsistent parade of suspicion. With this ungracious dismissal he went away in high good-humour, notwithstanding.

"Why need we leave the drawing-room so very early?" said I, in a pet.

"We need not go now, as that man is gone," she said, and quickly closed the window-shutters, and drew the curtains.

Laura, when she had made these arrangements, laid her hand on my shoulder, and looked with great affection and anxiety in my face.

"You are vexed, darling, because I got rid of that person."

"No," said I; "but I'm vexed because you got rid of him rudely."

"I should have prevented his staying at that window for a single minute, if I had been quite sure that he is the person I suppose. If he is—oh! how I wish he were a thousand miles away!"

"I don't think you would be quite so hard upon him, if he had divided his conversation a little more equally," I said with the bluntness of vexation.

Laura hardly smiled. There was a pained, disappointed look in her face, but the kindest you can imagine.

"No, Ethel, I did not envy your good fortune. There is no one on earth to whom I should not prefer talking."

"But who is he?" I urged.

"I can't tell you."

"Surely you can say the name of the person you take him for?" I insisted.

"I am not certain; if he be the person he resembles, he took care to place himself so that I could not, or, at least, did not, see him well; there are two or three people mixed up in a great misfortune, whom I hate to name, or think of. I thought at one time I recognised him; but afterwards I grew doubtful. I never saw the person I mean more than twice in my life; but I know very well what he is capable of; his name is Marston; but I am not at all certain that this is he."

"You run away with things," I said. "How do you know that Mr. Carmel's account may not be a very unfair one?"

"I don't rely on Mr. Carmel's account of Mr. Marston, if t' is is he. I knew a great deal about him. You must not ask me how that was, or anything more. He is said to be, and I believe it, a bad, selfish, false man. I am terrified when I think of your having made his acquaintance. If he continues

here, we must go up to town. I am half distracted. He dare not give us any trouble there."

"How did he quarrel with Mr. Carmel?" I asked, full of curiosity.

"I never heard; I did not know that he was even acquainted with him; but I think you may be perfectly certain that everything he said about Mr. Carmel is untrue. He knows that Mr. Carmel warned us against making his acquaintance; and his reason for talking as he does, is simply to discredit him. I dare say he'll take an opportunity of injuring him also. There is not time to hear from Mr. Ware. The only course, if he stays here for more than a day or two, is, as I said, to run up to your papa's house in town, and stay there till he is gone."

Again my belief in Mr. Marston was shaken; and I reviewed my hard thoughts of Mr. Carmel with something like compunction. The gloom and pallor of Laura's face haunted me.

CHAPTER XVII.

LEMUEL BLOUNT.

NEXT morning, at about half-past ten, as Laura and I sat in our breakfast-room, a hired carriage with two horses, which had evidently been driven at a hard pace, passed our window at a walk. The driver, who was leading his beasts, asked a question of Thomas Jones, who was rolling the gravel on the court-yard before the window; and then he led them round the corner toward the steward's house. The carriage was empty; but in another minute it was followed up by the person whom we might presume to have been its occupant. He turned towards our window as he

passed, so that we had a full view of this new visitor.

He was a man who looked past sixty, slow-paced, and very solemn; he was dressed in a clumsy black suit; his face was large, square, and sallow; his cheek and chin were smoothly shorn and blue. His hat was low-crowned, and broad in the brim. He had a cotton umbrella in his big gloved hand, and a coloured pocket-handkerchief sticking out of his pocket. A great bunch of seals hung from his watch-chain under his black waistcoat. He was walking so slowly that we had no difficulty in observing these details; and he stopped before the hall-door, as if doubtful whether he should enter there. A word, however, from Thomas Jones set him right, and he in turn disappeared round the corner.

We did not know what to make of this figure, whom we now conjectured to have come in quest of the shipwrecked stranger.

Thomas Jones ran round before him to

the door of the steward's house, which he opened; and the new-comer thanked him with a particularly kind smile. He knocked on chance at the door to the right, and the voice of our unknown guest told him to come in.

"Oh, Mr. Blount!" said the young gentleman, rising, hesitating, and then tendering his hand very respectfully, and looking in the sensible, vulgar face of the old man as if he were by no means sure how that tender might be received. "I hope, sir, I have not quite lost your friendship. I hope I retain some, were it ever so little, of the goodwill you once bore me. I hope, at least, that you will allow me to say that I am glad to see you; I feel it."

The old man, bowed his head, holding it a little on one side while the stranger spoke; it was the attitude of listening rather than of respect. When the young gentleman had done speaking, his visitor raised his head again. The young man smiled

faintly, and still extended his hand, looking very pale. Mr. Blount did not smile in answer; his countenance was very sombre, one might say sad.

"I never yet, sir, refused the hand of any man living when offered to me in sincerity, especially that of one in whom I felt, I may say, at one time a warm interest, although he may have given me reason to alter the opinion I then entertained of him."

Thus speaking, he gravely took the young man's hand, and shook it in a thoughtful, melancholy way, lowering his head again as he had done before.

"I don't ask how my uncle feels towards me," said the young man, half inquiringly.

"You need not," answered the visitor.

"I am at all events very much obliged to you," said the young man, humbly, "for your friendship, Mr. Blount. There is, I know, but one way of interesting your sympathy, and that is by telling you frankly how deep and true my repentance is; how

I execrate my ingratitude; how I deplore my weakness and criminality." He paused, looking earnestly at the old man, who, however, simply bowed his head again, and made no comment.

"I can't justify anything I have done; but in my letter I ventured to say a few words in extenuation," he continued. "I don't expect to soften my uncle's just resentment, but I am most anxious, Mr. Blount, my best friend on earth, to recover something, were it ever so little, of the ground I have lost in your opinion."

"Time, sir, tries all things," answered the new-comer, gently; "if you mean to lead a new life, you will have opportunity to prove it."

"Was my uncle softened, ever so little, when he heard that the *Conway Castle* had gone down?" asked the young man, after a short silence.

"I was with him at breakfast when the morning paper brought the intelligence," said

Mr. Blount. "I don't recollect that he expressed any regret."

"I dare say; I can quite suppose it; I ought to have known that he was pleased rather."

"No; I don't think he was pleased. I rather think he exhibited indifference," answered Mr. Blount.

With some grim remarks I believe the young man's uncle had received the sudden news of his death.

"Did my uncle see the letter I wrote to you, Mr. Blount?"

"No."

"And why not?"

"You will not think, I hope, that I would for any consideration use a phrase that could wound you unnecessarily when I tell you?"

"Certainly not."

"Your letter mentioned that you had lost your papers and money in the ship. Now, if it should turn out that you had, in short, misstated anything——"

"Told a lie, you mean," interrupted the young man, his face growing white, and his eyes gleaming.

"It would have been discourteous in me to say so, but such was my meaning," he answered, with a very kind look. "It has been one object with me during my life to reconcile courtesy with truth. I am happy in the belief that I have done so, and I believe during a long life I have never once offended against the laws of politeness. Had you deceived him so soon again it would have sunk you finally and for ever. I thought it advisable, therefore, to give you an opportunity of reconsidering the statements of your letter before committing you by placing them before him as fact."

The young man flushed suddenly. It was his misfortune that he could not resent suspicion, however gross, although he might wince under the insult, all the more that it was just. Rather sulkily he said:

"I can only repeat, sir, that I have not

a shilling, nor a cheque; I left every paper and every farthing I possessed in my despatch-box, in my berth. Of course, I can't prove it; I can only repeat that every guinea I had in the world has gone to the bottom."

Mr. Blount raised his head. His square face and massive features confronted the younger man, and his honest brown eyes were fixed upon him with a grave and undisguised inquiry.

"I don't say that you have any certainty of recovering a place in your uncle's esteem, but the slightest prevarication in matters of this kind would be simply suicidal. Now, I ask you, sir, on your honour, did no part of your money, or of your papers, go by rail either to Bristol or to London?"

"Upon my honour, Mr. Blount, not a farthing. I had only about ten pounds in gold, all the rest was in letters of credit and cheques; and, bad as I am, I should scarcely be fool enough to practise a trick,

which, from its nature, must be almost instantaneously self-exposed. My uncle could have stopped payment of them; probably he has done so."

"I see you understand something of business, sir."

"I should have understood a great deal more, Mr. Blount, and been a much better man, if I had listened to you long ago. I hope, in future, to be less my own adviser, and more your pupil."

To this flattering speech the old man listened attentively, but made no answer.

"Your letter followed me to Chester," said Mr. Blount, after an interval. "I received it last night. He was in London when I saw him last; and my letter, telling him that you are still living, may not reach him, possibly, for some days. Thus, you see, you would have the start of him, if I may so describe it, without rudeness; and you are aware he has no confidence in you; and, certainly, if you will permit me to say

so, he ought not to have any. I have a note of the number of the cheque ; you can write a line saying that you have lost it, and requesting that payment may be stopped ; and I will enclose it to Messrs. Dignum and Budget."

"There's pen and ink here ; I'll do it this moment. I thought you had renounced me also ; and I was going to write again to try you once more, before taking to the high road," he said, with dismal jocularity.

It wrung the pride of the young man sorely to write the note. But the bitter pill was swallowed ; and he handed it, but with signs of suppressed anger, to Mr. Blount.

"That will answer perfectly," said the man in black.

"It enables you to stop that cheque by this post, without first seeing my uncle ; and it relieves you," said the young man, with bitter and pitiless irony, "of the folly of acting in the most trifling matter upon my word of honour. It is certainly making the

most of the situation. I have made one great slip—a crime, if you like——"

"Quite so, sir," acquiesced Mr. Blount, with melancholy politeness.

"Under great momentary temptation," continued the young man, "and without an idea of ultimately injuring any human being to the amount of a single farthing. I'm disowned; anyone that pleases may safely spit in my face. I'm quite aware how I stand in this infernal pharisaical world."

Mr. Blount looked at him gravely, but made him no answer. The young gentleman did not want to quarrel with Mr. Blount just then. He could not afford it.

"I don't mean you, of course," he said; "you have been always only too much my friend. I am speaking of the world; you know, quite well, if this unlucky thing takes wind, and my uncle's conduct toward me is the very thing to set people talking and inquiring, I may as well take off my hat to you all, drink your healths in a glass of

prussic acid, and try how a trip to some other world agrees with me."

"You are speaking, of course, sir, in jest," said Mr. Blount, with some disgust in his grave countenance; "but I may mention that the unfortunate occurrence is known but to your uncle and to me, and to no other person on earth. You bear the name of Marston—you'll excuse me for reminding you, sir—and upon that point he is sensitive and imperious. He considered, sir, that your bearing that name, if I may so say, without being supposed guilty of a rudeness, would slur it; and, therefore, you'll change it, as arranged, on embarking at Southampton. It would be highly inexpedient to annoy your uncle by any inadvertence upon this point. Your contemplating suicide would be—you will pardon the phrase—cowardly and impious. Not, indeed, if I may so say consistently with the rules of politeness," he added, thoughtfully, "that your sudden removal would involve any loss to anybody,

except, possibly, some few Jews, and people of that kind."

"Certainly—of course. You need not insist upon that. I feel my degradation, I hope, sufficiently. It is not his fault, at least, if I don't."

"And, from myself, I suggest that he will be incensed, if he learns that you are accepting the hospitality of Mr. Ware's house. I think, sir, that men of the world, especially gentlemen, will regard it, if the phrase be not discourteous, in the light of a shabby act."

"Shabby, sir! what do you mean by shabby?" said Mr. Marston, flaming up.

"I mean, sir—you'll excuse me—paltry; don't you see?—or mean. His feelings would be strongly excited by your partaking of Mr. Ware's hospitality."

"Hospitality! Shelter, you mean; slates, walls—little more than they give a beast in a pound! Why, I don't owe them a crust, or a cup of tea. I get everything from the

hotel there, at Cardyllion; and Mr. Ware is a thousand miles away!"

"I speak of it simply as a question of expediency, sir. He will be inflamed against you, if he hears you have, in ever so small a matter, placed yourself under an obligation to Mr. Ware."

"But he need not hear of it; why should you mention it?"

"I cannot practise reserve with a man who treats me with unlimited confidence," he answered, gently. "Why should you not go to the hotel?"

"I have no money."

"But you get everything you want there on credit?"

"Well, yes, that's true; but it would scarcely do to make that move; I have been as ill as ever I was in my life since that awful night on the rocks down there. You can have no idea what it was; and the doctor says I must keep quiet. It isn't worth while moving now; so soon as I have funds, I'll leave this."

"I will lend you what you require, with much pleasure, sir," proffered Mr. Blount.

"Well, thanks, it is not very much, and it's hard to refuse; one feels such a fool without a shilling to give to a messenger, or to the servants; I haven't even a fee for the doctor who has been attending me."

Determined by this pathetic appeal, Mr. Blount took a bank-note of ten pounds from his purse and lent it to Mr. Marston.

"And, I suppose, you'll remove forthwith to the hotel," he said.

"The moment I feel equal to it," he replied. "Why, d—— it, don't you think I'm ready to go, when I'm able? I—I—— Don't mind me, pray. Your looks reprove me. I'm shocked at myself when I use those phrases. I know very well that I have just escaped by a miracle from death. I feel how utterly unfit I was to die; and, I assure you, I'm not ungrateful. You shall see that my whole future life will be the better for it. I'm not the graceless

wretch I have been. One such hour as preceded my scaling that rock out there is a lesson for a life. You have often spoken to me on the subjects that ought to interest us all. I mean when I was a boy. Your words have returned upon me. You derive happiness from the good you do to others. I thought you had cast your bread upon the waters to see it no more; but you have found it at last. I am very grateful to you."

Did Mr. Marston believe that good people are open, in the matter of their apostleship, to flattery, as baser mortals are in matters of another sort? It was to be hoped that Mr. Marston felt half what he uttered. His words, however, did produce a favourable and a pleasant impression upon Mr. Blount. His large face beamed for a moment with honest gratification. His eyes looked full upon him, as if the benevolence of his inmost heart spoke out through them.

"If anything can possibly please him, sir,

in connexion with you," said Mr. Blount, with all his customary suavity and unconscious bluntness, "it will be to learn that recent events have produced a salutary impression and a total change in you. Not that I suppose he cares very much; but I'm glad to have to represent to him anything favourable in this particular case. I mean to return to London direct, and if your uncle is still there you shall hear in a day or two —at all events very soon; but I wish you were in the hotel."

"Well, I'll go to the hotel, if they can put me up. I'll go at once; address to me to the post-office—Richard Marston, I suppose?"

"Just so, sir, Richard Marston."

Mr. Blount had risen, and stood gravely, prepared to take his leave.

"I have kept you a long time, Mr. Blount; will you take anything?"

Mr. Blount declined refreshments.

"I must leave you now, sir; there is a crisis in every life. What has happened to you

is stupendous; the danger and the deliverance. That hour is past. May its remembrance be with you ever—day and night! Do not suppose that it can rest in your mind without positive consequences. It must leave you a great deal better or a great deal worse. Farewell, sir."

So they parted. Mr. Marston seemed to have lost all his spirits and half his energy in that interview. He sat motionless in the chair into which he had thrown himself, and gazed listlessly on the floor in a sulky reverie. At length he said:

"That is a most unpleasant old fellow; I wish he was not so unscrupulously addicted to telling truth."

CHAPTER XVIII.

IDENTIFIED.

IT was a gloomy day; I had left Laura Grey in the room we usually occupied, where she was now alone, busy over some of our accounts. I dare say her thoughts now and then wandered into speculations respecting the identity of the visitor who, the night before, evaded her recognition, if indeed he was recognisable by her at all. Her doubts were now resolved. The room door opened, and the tenant of the steward's house entered coolly, and approached the table where she was sitting. Laura Grey did not rise; she did not speak; she sat, pen in hand, staring at him as if she were on the

point of fainting. The star-shaped scar on his forehead, fixed there by some old fracture, and his stern and energetic features, were now distinctly before her. He kept his eye fixed upon her, and smiled, dubious of his reception.

"I saw you, Miss Grey, yesterday afternoon, though you did not see me. I avoided your eye then; but it was idle supposing that I could continue even a few days longer in this place without you seeing me. I came last night with my mind made up to reveal myself, but I put it off till we should be to ourselves, as we now are. I saw you half guessed me, but you weren't sure, and I left you in doubt."

He approached till his hands rested upon the table opposite, and said, with a very stern and eager face:

"Miss Grey, upon my honour, upon my soul, if I can give you an assurance which can bind a gentleman, I entreat you to believe me. I shan't offer one syllable con-

trary to what I now feel to be your wishes. I shan't press you, I shan't ask you to hear me upon the one subject you say you object to. You allege that I have done you a wrong. I will spare no pains to redress it. I will do my utmost in any way you please to dictate. I will do all this, I swear by everything a gentleman holds most sacred, upon one very easy condition."

He paused. He was leaning forward, his dark eyes were fixed upon her with a piercing gaze. She did not, or could not, speak. She was answering his gaze with a stare wilder and darker, but her very lips were white.

"I know I have stood in your way; I admit I have injured you, not by accident; it was with the design and wish to injure you, if the endeavour to detach a fellow like that be an injury. You shall forgive me; the most revengeful woman can forgive a man the extravagances of his jealousy. I am here to renounce all, to retrieve

everything. I admit the injury; it shall be repaired."

She spoke now for the first time, and said, hardly above her breath:

"It's irreparable. It can't be undone—quite irreparable."

"When I undertake a thing I do it; I'll do this at any sacrifice—yes, at any, of pride or opinion. Suppose I go to the persons in question, and tell them that they have been deceived, and that I deceived them, and now confess the whole thing a tissue of lies?"

"You'll never do that."

"By Heavens, as I stand here, I'll do it! Do you suppose I care for their opinion in comparison with a real object? I'll do it. I'll write and sign it in your presence; you shall have it to lock up in that desk, and do what you please with it, upon one condition."

A smile of incredulity lighted Laura Grey's face faintly, as she shook her head.

"You don't believe me, but you shall.

Tell me what will satisfy you—what practicable proof will convince you. I'll set you right with them. You believe in a Providence. Do you think I was saved from that wreck for nothing?"

Laura Grey looked down upon her desk; his fierce eyes were fixed on her with intense eagerness, for he thought he read in her pale face and her attitude signs of compliance. It needed, he fancied, perhaps but a slight impulse to determine her.

"I'll do it all; but, as I told you, on one condition."

There was a silence for a time. He was still watching her intently.

"Let us both be reasonable," he resumed. "I ought, I now know, to have seen long ago, Miss Grey, that there was no use in my talking to you as I did. I have been mad. There's the whole story; and now I renounce it all. I despair; it's over. I'll give you the very best proof of that. I shall devote myself to another, and you shall aid me. Pray,

not a word, till you have heard me out; that's the condition. If you accept it, well. If not, so sure as there is life in me, you may regret it."

"There's nothing more you can do I care for now," she broke out with a look of agony. "Oh, Heaven help me!"

"You'll find there is," he continued, with a quiet laugh. "You can talk as long as you please when your turn comes. Just hear me out. I only want you to have the whole case before you. I say you can help me, and you shall. I'm a very good fellow to work with, and a bitter one to work against. Now, one moment. I have made the acquaintance of a young lady whom I wish to marry. Upon my sacred honour, I have no other intention. She is poor; her father is over head and ears in debt; she can never have a guinea more than two thousand pounds. It can't be sordid, you'll allow. There is a Jesuit fellow hanging about this place. He hates me; he has

been in here telling lies of me. I expect you to prevent my being prejudiced by that slanderer. You can influence the young lady in my favour, and enable me to improve our acquaintance. I expect you to do so. These are my conditions. She is Miss Ethel Ware."

The shock of a disclosure so entirely unexpected, and the sting possibly of wounded vanity, made her reply more spirited than it would have been. She stood up, and said, quietly and coldly :

"I have neither right nor power in the matter; and if I had, nothing on earth could induce me to exercise them in your favour. You can write, if you please, to Mr. Ware, for leave to pay your addresses to his daughter. But without his leave you shall not visit here, nor join her in her walks; and if you attempt to do either, I will remove Miss Ware, and place her under the care of some one better able than I to protect her.

The young man looked at her with a very pale face.

"I thought you knew me better, Miss Grey," he said, with an angry sneer. "You refuse your chance of reconciliation."

He paused, as if to allow her time to think better of it.

"Very well; I'm glad I've found you out. Don't you think your situation is rather an odd one—a governess in Mr. Ware's country quarters? We all know pretty well what sort of gentleman Mr. Ware is, a gentleman particularly well qualified by good taste and high spirits to make his house agreeable. He was here, I understand, for about a week a little time ago, but his wife does not trouble your solitude much; and now that he is on his travels, he is succeeded by a young friar. I happen to know what sort of person Carmel was, and is. Was ever young lady so fortunate? One only wonders that Mr. Ware, under these circumstances, is not a little

alarmed for the Protestantism of his governess. I should scarcely have believed that you had found so easily so desirable a home; but fate has ordained that I should light upon your retreat, and hear with my own ears the good report of the neighbours, and see with my own eyes how very comfortable and how extremely happy you are."

He smiled and bowed ironically, and drew towards the door.

"There was nothing to prevent our being on the friendliest terms—nothing."

He paused, but she made him no answer.

"No reason on earth why we should not. You could have done me a very trifling kindness. I could have served you vitally."

Another pause here.

"I can ascribe your folly to nothing but the most insensate malice. I shall take care of myself. You ought to know me. Whatever befalls, you have to thank but your own infatuated obstinacy for it."

"I have friends still," she cried, in a

sudden burst of agony. "Your cowardice, your threats and insults, your persecution of a creature quite defenceless and heart-broken, and with no one near to help her——"

Her voice faltered.

"Find out your friends, if you have got them; tell them what you please; and, if it is worth while, I will contradict your story. I'll fight your friends. I'll pit my oath against yours."

There was no sneer on his features now, no irony in his tones; he was speaking with the bitter vehemence of undisguised fury.

"I shrink from nothing. Things have happened since to make me more reckless, and by so much the more dangerous. If you knew a little more you would scarcely dare to quarrel with me." He dashed his hand as he spoke upon the table.

"I am afraid—I'm frightened; but no-

thing on earth shall make me do what you ask."

"That's enough—that closes it," said he. There was a little pause. "And remember, the consequences I promise are a great deal nearer than you probably dream of."

With these words, spoken slowly, with studied meaning, he left the room as suddenly as he had appeared. Laura Grey was trembling. Her thoughts were not very clear. She was shocked, and even terrified.

The sea, which had swallowed all the rest, had sent up that one wicked man alive. How many good, kind, and useful lives were lost to earth, she thought, in those dreadful moments, and that one life, barren of all good, profligate and cruel, singled out alone for mercy!

CHAPTER XIX.

PISTOLS FOR TWO.

I KNEW nothing of all this. I was not to learn what had passed at that interview till many years later. Laura Grey, on my return, told me nothing. I am sure she was right. There were some things she could not have explained, and the stranger's apparently insane project of marrying penniless me was a secret better in her own keeping than in that of a simple and very self-willed girl.

When I returned there were signs of depression and anxiety in her looks, and her silence and abstraction excited my curiosity. She easily put me off, however. I knew

that her spirits sometimes failed her, although she never talked about her troubles; and therefore her dejection was, after all, not very remarkable. We heard nothing more of our guest till next day, when Rebecca Torkill told us that he was again suffering from one of his headaches. The intelligence did not excite all the sympathy she seemed to expect. Shortly after sunset we saw him pass the window of our room, and walk by under the trees.

With an ingrained perversity, the more Laura Grey warned me against this man, the more I became interested in him. She and I were both unusually silent that evening. I think that her thoughts were busy with him; I know that mine were.

"We won't mind opening the window to-night," said Laura.

"I was just thinking how pleasant it would be. Why should we not open it?" I answered.

"Because we should have him here

again; and he is not the sort of person your mamma would like you to become acquainted with."

I was a little out of humour, but did not persist. I sat in a sullen silence, my eyes looking dreamily through the window. The early twilight had faded into night by the time the stranger re-appeared. I saw him turn the line of his walk near the window; and seeing it shut, pause for a moment. I dare say he was more vexed than I. He made up his mind, however, against a scene. He looked on the ground and over his shoulder, again at the window.

Mr. Marston walked round the corner to the steward's house. The vague shadows and lights of night were abroad by this time. Candles were in his room; he found Rebecca Torkill there, with a small tankard and a tea-cup on a salver, awaiting his return.

"La! sir, to think of you doing such another wild thing, and you, only this

minute, at death's door with your head! And how is it now, please, sir?"

"A thousand thanks. My head is as well as my hat. My headache goes as it comes, in a moment. What is this?"

"Some gruel, please, sir, with sugar, white wine, and nutmeg. I thought you might like it."

"Caudle, by Jove!" smiled the gentleman, "isn't it?"

"Well, it is; and it's none the worse o' that."

"All the better," exclaimed Mr. Marston, who chose to be on friendly terms with the old lady. "How can I thank you?"

"It's just the best thing in the world to make you sleep after a headache. You'll take some while it's hot."

"I can't thank you half enough," he said.

"I'll come back, sir, and see you by-and-by," and the good woman toddled out, leaving him alone with his gruel.

"I must not offend her." He poured

some out into his cup, tasted it, and laughed quietly. "Sipping caudle! Well, this is rather a change for Richard Marston, by Jove! A change every way. Let us make a carouse of it," he said, and threw it out of the window.

Mr. Marston threw on his loose wrapper, and folded his muffler about his throat, replaced his hat, and with his cane in his fingers, was about to walk down to the town of Cardyllion. A word or two spoken, quite unsuspiciously, by Doctor Mervyn that morning, had touched a sensitive nerve, and awakened a very acute anxiety in Mr. Marston's mind. The result was his intended visit, at the fall of night, to the High-street of the quaint little town.

He was on the point of setting out, when Rebecca Torkill returned with a sliced lemon on a plate.

"Some likes a squeeze of a lemon in it," she observed, "and I thought I might as well leave it here."

"It is quite delicious, really," he replied, as Mrs. Torkill peeped into the open flagon.

"Why," said she, in unfeigned admiration, "I'm blest if he's left a drop! Ah! ah! Well, it was good; and I'll have some more for you before you go to bed. But you shouldn't drink it off, all at a pull, like that. You might make yourself ill that way."

"We men like good liquor so well—so well—we—we—what was I saying? Oh! yes, we like our liquor so well, we never know when we have had enough. It's a bad excuse; but let it pass. I'm going out for a little walk, it always sets me up after one of those headaches. Good evening, Mrs. Torkill."

He was thinking plainly of other matters than her, or her caudle; and, before she had time to reply, he was out of the door.

It was a sweet, soft night; the moon was up. The walk from Malory to the town is lonely and pretty. He took the narrow road that approaches Cardyllion in an inland

line, parallel to the road that runs by the shore of the estuary. His own echoing footsteps among the moonlit trees was the only sign of life, except the distant barking of a watch-dog, now and then, that was audible. A melancholy wind was piping high in the air, from over the sea; you might fancy it the aerial lamentation of the drowned.

He was passing the churchyard now, and stopped partly to light a cigar, partly to look at the old church, the effect of which, in the moonlight, was singular. Its gable and towers cast a sharp black shadow across the grass and gravestones, like that of a gigantic hand whose finger pointed towards him. He smiled cynically as the fancy struck him.

"Another grave there, I should not wonder if the news is true. What an ass that fellow is! Another grave, I dare say; and in my present luck, I suppose I shall fill it—fill it! That's ambiguous; yes, the more

like an oracle. That shadow does look curiously like a finger pointing at me!"

He smoked for a time, leaning on the pier of the iron wicket that from this side admits to the churchyard, and looking in with thoughts very far from edifying.

"This will be the second disagreeable discovery, without reckoning Carmel, I shall have made since my arrival in this queer corner of the world. Who could have anticipated meeting Laura here?—or that whining fool, Carmel? Who would have fancied that Jennings, of all men, would have turned up in this out-of-the-way nook? By Jove! I'm like Saint Paul, hardly out of the shipwreck when a viper fastens on my hand. Old Sprague made us turn all that into elegiacs. I wonder whether I could make elegiacs now."

He loitered slowly on, by the same old road, into Castle-street, the high-street of the quaint little town of steep roofs and many gables. The hall-door of the "Ver-

ney Arms" was open, and the light of the lamp glowed softly on the pavement.

Mr. Marston hated suspense. He would rather make a bad bargain, off-hand, than endure the torture of a long negotiation. He would stride out to meet a catastrophe rather than await its slow, sidelong approaches. This intolerance of uncertainty made him often sudden in action. He had come down to the town simply to reconnoitre. He was beginning, by this time, to meditate something more serious. Under the shadow of the houses opposite, he walked slowly up and down the silent flagway, eyeing the door of the "Verney Arms" askance, as he finished his cigar.

It so happened, that exactly as he had thrown away the stump of it, a smoker, who had just commenced his, came slowly down the steps of the "Verney Arms," and stood upon the deserted flagway, and as he puffed indolently, he looked up the street, and down the street, and up at the sky.

The splendid moon shone full on his face, and Mr. Marston knew him. He was tall and slight, and rather good-looking, with a face of great intelligence, heightened with something of enthusiasm, and stood there smoking, in happy unconsciousness that an unfriendly eye was watching him across the street.

Mr. Marston stood exactly opposite. The smoker, who had emerged from the "Verney Arms," stood before the centre of the steps, and Mr. Marston, on a sudden, as if he was bent on walking straight through him into the hotel, walked at a brisk pace across the street, and halted, within a yard, in front of him.

"I understand," said Marston instantly, in a low, stern tone, "that you said at Black's, when I was away yachting, that you had something to say to me."

The smoker had lowered his cigar, and was evidently surprised, as well he might be; he looked at him hard for some time, and

at length replied as grimly: "Yes, I said so; yes I do; I mean to speak to you."

"All right; no need to raise our voices here though; I think you had better find some place where we can talk without exciting attention."

"Come this way," said the tall young man, turning suddenly and walking up the street at a leisurely pace. Mr. Marston walked beside him, a yard or two apart. They might be very good friends, for anything that appeared to a passer-by. He turned down a short and narrow by-street, with only room for a house or two, and they found themselves on the little common that is known as the Green of Cardyllion. The sea, at its further side, was breaking in long, tiny waves along the shingle, the wind came over the old castle with a melancholy soughing; the green was solitary; and only here and there, from the windows of the early little town, a light gleamed. The moon shone bright on the green, turning

the grass to grey, and silvering the ripples on the dark estuary, and whitening the misty outlines of the noble Welsh mountains across the water. A more tranquillising scene could scarcely be imagined.

When they had got to the further end, they stopped, as if by common consent.

"I'm ready to hear you," said Marston.

"Well, I have only to tell you, and I'm glad of this opportunity, that I have ascertained the utter falsehood of your stories, and that you are a coward and a villain."

"Thanks; that will do, Mr. Jennings," answered Marston, growing white with fury, but speaking with cold and quiet precision. "You have clenched this matter by an insult which I should have answered by cutting you across the face with this,"—and he made his cane whistle in the air,—"but that I reserve you for something more effectual, and shall run no risk of turning the matter into a police-office affair. I have neither pistols nor friend here. We must dispense with

formalities; we can do all that is necessary for ourselves, I suppose. I'll call to-morrow, early, at the 'Verney Arms.' A word or two will settle everything."

He raised his hat ever so little, implying that that conference, for the present, was over; but before he could turn, Mr. Jennings, who did not choose to learn more than was unavoidable to his honour, said,

"You will find a note at the bar."

"Address it Richard Wynyard, then."

"Your friend?"

"No; myself."

"Oh! a false name?" sneered Mr. Jennings.

"You may use the true one, of course. My tailor is looking for me a little more zealously, I fancy, than you were; and if you publish it in Cardyllion, it may lead to his arresting me, and saving you all further trouble in this, possibly, agitating affair." The young man accompanied these words with a cold laugh.

"Well, Richard Wynyard be it," said Mr. Jennings, with a slight flush.

And with these words the two young men turned their backs on each other. Mr. Jennings walked along beside the shingle, with the sound of the light waves in his ears, and thinking rather hurriedly, as men will, whom so serious a situation has suddenly overtaken. Marston turned, as I said, the other way, and without entering the town again, approached Malory by the narrow road that passes close under the castle walls, and follows the line of the high banks overlooking the estuary.

If there be courage and mental activity, and no conscience, we have a very dangerous devil. A spoiled child, in which self is supreme, who has no softness of heart, and some cleverness and energy, easily degenerates into that sort of Satan. And yet, in a kind of way, Marston was popular. He could spend money freely—it was not his own—and when he was in spirits he was amusing.

When he stared in Jennings' face this evening, the bruise and burning of an old jealousy were in his heart. The pain of that hellish hate is often lightly inflicted; but what is more cruel that vanity? He had abandoned the pursuit in which that jealousy was born, but the hatred remained. And now he had his revenge in hand. It is a high stake, one's life on a match of pistol-shooting. But his brute courage made nothing of it. It was an effort to him to think himself in danger, and he did not make that effort. He was thinking how to turn the situation to account.

CHAPTER XX.

THE WOOD OF PLAS YLWD.

NEXT morning, Mr. Marston, we learned, had been down to Cardyllion early. He had returned at about ten o'clock, and he had his luggage packed up, and despatched again to the proprieter of the "Verney Arms." So we might assume that he was gone.

The mountain that had weighed on Laura Grey's spirits was perceptibly lightened. I heard her whisper to herself, "Thank God!" when she heard Rebecca Torkill's report, and the further intelligence that their guest had told her and Thomas Jones that he was going to the town, to return no more to

Malory. Laura was now, again, quite like herself. For my part, I was a little glad, and (shall I confess it?) also a little sorry! I had not quite made up my mind respecting this agreeable Mr. Marston, of whom Mr. Carmel and Miss Grey had given each so alarming a character.

About an hour later, I was writing to mamma, and sitting at the window, when, raising my eyes, I saw Laura Grey and Mr. Marston, much to my surprise, walking side by side up the avenue towards the hall-door. They appeared to be in close conversation; Mr. Marston seemed to talk volubly and carelessly, and cut the heads of the weeds with his cane as he sauntered by her side. Laura Grey held her handkerchief to her eyes, except now and then, when she spoke a few words, as it seemed passionately.

When they came to the court-yard, opposite to the hall-door, she broke away from him, hurried across, ran up the steps, and

shut the door. He stood where she had left him, looking after her and smiling. I thought he was going to follow; he saw me in the window, and raised his hat, still smiling, and with this farewell salute he turned on his heel and walked slowly away towards the gate. I ran to the hall, and there found Laura Grey. She had been crying, and was agitated.

"Ethel, darling," she said, "let nothing on earth induce you to speak to that man again. I implore of you to give me your solemn promise. If he speaks truth it will not cost you anything, for he says he is going away this moment, not to return.

It certainly looked very like it, for he had actually despatched his two boxes, he had "tipped" the servants handsomely at the steward's house, and having taken a courteous leave of them, and left with Mrs. Torkill a valedictory message of thanks for me, he had got into a "fly" and driven off to the "Verney Arms."

Well, whether for good or ill, he had now unquestionably taken his departure; but not without leaving a sting. The little he had spoken to Miss Grey, at the moment of his flight, had proved, it seemed, a Parthian arrow tipped with poison. She seemed to grow more and more miserable every hour. She had lain down on her bed, and was crying bitterly, and trembling. I began to grow vexed at the cruelty of the man who had deliberately reduced her to that state. I knew not what gave him the power of torturing her. If I was angry, I was also intensely curious. My questions produced no clearer answers than this: "Nothing, dear, that you could possibly understand without first hearing a very long story. I hope the time is coming when I may tell it all to you. But the secret is not mine; it concerns other people; and at present I must keep it."

Mr. Marston had come and gone, then, like a flash of light, leaving my eyes dazzled.

The serenity of Malory seemed now too quiet for me; the day was dull. I spent my time sitting in the window, or moping about the place. I must confess that I had, by no means, the horror of this stranger that the warnings of Mr. Carmel and Laura Grey ought, I suppose, to have inspired. On the contrary, his image came before me perpetually, and everything I looked at, the dark trees, the window-sill, the garden, the estuary, and the ribs of rock round which the cruel sea was sporting, recalled the hero of a terrible romance.

I tried in vain to induce Laura to come with me for a walk, late in the afternoon. So I set out alone, turning my back on Cardyllion, in the direction of Penruthyn Priory. The sun was approaching the western horizon as I drew near the picturesque old farm-house of Plas Ylwd.

A little to the south of this stretches a fragment old forest, covering some nine or ten acres of peaty ground. It is a de-

caying wood, and in that melancholy and miserable plight, I think, very beautiful. I would commend it as a haunt to artists in search of "studies," who love huge trees with hollow trunks, some that have "cast" half their boughs as deer do their antlers; some wreathed and laden with ivy, others that stretch withered and barkless branches into the air; ground that is ribbed and unequal, and cramped with great ringed, snake-like roots, that writhe and knot themselves into the earth; here and there overspread with little jungles of bramble, and broken and burrowed by rabbits.

Into this grand and singular bit of forest, now glorified by the coloured light of evening, I had penetrated some little way. Arrested in my walk by the mellow song of a blackbird, I listened in the sort of ecstasy that every one has, I suppose, experienced under similar circumstances; and I was in the full enjoyment of this sylvan melody, when I was startled, and the bird put to

flight, by the near report of fire-arms. Once or twice I had heard boys shooting at birds in this wood, but they had always accompanied their practice with shouting and loud talking. A dead silence followed this. I had no reason for any misgivings about so natural an interruption in such a place, but I did feel an ominous apprehension. I began to move, and was threading my way through one of these blackberry thickets, when I heard, close to my side, the branches of some underwood thrust aside, and Mr. Marston, looking pale and wicked, walked quickly by. It was plain he did not see me; I was screened by the stalks and sprays through which I saw him. He had no weapon as he passed me; he was drawing on his glove. The sudden appearance of Mr. Marston, whom I believed to be by this time miles away—at the other side of Cardyllion—was a shock that rather confirmed my misgivings.

I waited till he was quite gone, and then

passed down the path he had come by. I saw nothing to justify alarm, so I walked a little in the same direction, looking to the right and left. In a little opening among the moss-grown trunks of the trees, I soon saw something that frightened me. It was a man lying on his back, deadly pale, upon the ground; his waistcoat was open, and his shirt-front covered with blood, that seemed to ooze from under his hand, which was pressing on it; his hat was on the ground, some way behind. A pistol lay on the grass beside him, and another not far from his feet.

I was very much frightened, and the sight of blood made me feel faint. The wounded man saw me, I knew, for his eyes were fixed on me; his lips moved, and there was a kind of straining in his throat; he said a word or two, though I could not at first hear what. With a horrible reluctance, I came near and leaned a little over him, and then heard distinctly:

"Pray send help."

I bethought me instantly of the neighbouring farm-house of Plas Ylwd, and knowing this little forest tract well, I ran through it nearly direct to the farm-yard, and quickly succeeded in securing the aid of Farmer Prichard and all his family, except his wife, who stayed at home to get a bed ready for the reception of the wounded stranger. We all trooped back again through the woods, at a trot, I at their head, quite forgetting my dignity in my excitement. The wounded man appeared fainter. But he beckoned to us with his hand, without raising his arm, and with a great effort he said: "The blame is mine—all my fault—remember, if I die. I compelled this meeting."

I got Prichard to send his son, without a moment's delay, to Cardyllion, to bring Doctor Mervyn, and as they got the bleeding man on towards Plas Ylwd, I, in a state

of high excitement, walked swiftly homeward, hoping to reach Malory before the declining light failed altogether.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE PATIENT AT PLAS YLWD.

I GOT home just as the last broad beam of the setting sun was spent, and twilight overspread churchyard and manor-house, sea and land, with its grey mantle. Lights were gleaming from the drawing-room window as I approached; a very welcome light to me, for it told me that Laura Grey had come down, and I was longing to tell her my story. I found her, as I expected, seated quietly at our tea-table, and saw, in her surprised and eager looks, how much she was struck by the excitement which mine exhibited, as, without waiting to take off my hat or coat, I called on her to listen, and

stumbled and hurried through the opening of my strange story.

I had hardly mentioned the sudden appearance of Mr. Marston, when Laura Grey rose with her hands clasped :

" Was anyone shot? For God's sake, tell me quickly !"

I described all I had seen. She pressed her hands hard to her heart.

" Oh ! he has killed him—the villain ! His threats are always true—his promises never. Oh ! Ethel, darling, he has been so near me, and I never dreamed it."

" Who? What is it, Laura? Don't, darling, be so frightened ; he's not killed—nobody's killed. I daresay it is very trifling, and Doctor Mervyn is with him by this time."

" I am sure he's badly wounded ; he has killed him. He has hated him so long, he would never have left him till he had killed him."

She was growing quite distracted ; I, all

the time, doing my utmost to re-assure her.

"What is his name?" at length I asked.

The question seemed to quiet her. She looked at me, and then down; and then again at me.

Once or twice she had mentioned a brother whom she loved very much, and who was one of her great anxieties. Was this wounded man he? If not, was he a lover? This latter could hardly be; for she had once, after a long, laughing fencing with my close questions, told me suddenly, quite gravely, "I have no lover, and no admirer, except one whom I despise and dislike as much as I can anyone on earth." It was very possible that her brother was in debt, or in some other trouble that made her, for the present, object to disclose anything about him. I thought she was going to tell me a great deal now—but I was disappointed. I was again put off; but I knew she spoke truth, for she was the truest person I ever met, when she said that she longed to

tell me all her story, and that the time would soon come when she could. But now, poor thing! she was, in spite of all I could say, in a state, very nearly, of distraction. She never was coherent, except when, in answer to her constantly repeated questioning, I again and again described the appearance of the wounded man, which each time seemed to satisfy her on the point of identity, but without preventing her from renewing her inquiries with increasing detail.

That evening passed miserably enough for us both. Doctor Mervyn, on his way to his patient, looked in upon us early next morning, intent on learning all he could from me about the circumstances of the discovery of his patient. I had been too well drilled by prudent old Rebecca Torkill, to volunteer any information respecting the unexpected appearance of Mr. Marston so suspiciously near the scene of the occurrence. I described, therefore, simply the spectacle presented by the

wounded man, on my lighting upon him in the wood, and his removal to the farm-house of Plas Ylwd.

"It's all very fine, saying it was an accident," said the doctor, with a knowing nod and a smile. "Accident, indeed! If it was, why should he refuse to say who had a hand in the accident, besides himself? But there's no need to make a secret of the matter, for unless something unexpected should occur, he must, in the ordinary course of things, be well in little more than a week. It's an odd wound. The ball struck the collar-bone and broke it, glancing upward. If it had penetrated obliquely downward instead, it might have killed him on the spot."

"Do you know his name?" I inquired.

"No; he's very reserved; fellows in his situation often are; they don't like figuring in the papers, you understand; or being bound over to be of good behaviour; or, possibly, prosecuted. But no trouble will

come of this; and he'll be on his legs again in a very few days."

With this re-assuring news the doctor left us. Miss Grey was relieved. One thing seemed pretty certain; and that was that the guilty and victorious duellist would not venture to appear in our part of the world for some time to come.

"Will you come with me to-day, to ask how he gets on?" I said to Laura as soon as the doctor was gone.

"No, I can't do that; but it would be very kind of you: that is, if you have no objection."

"None in the world; we must get Rebecca to make broth, or whatever else the doctor may order, and shall I mention your name to Mrs. Prichard? I mean, do you wish the patient—shall we call him—to know that you are here?"

"Oh! no, pray. He is the last person on earth——"

"You are sure?"

"Perfectly. I entreat, dear Ethel, that you run no risk of my name being mentioned."

"Why, Mr. Marston knows that you are here," I said persistently.

"Bad as that was, this would be intolerable. I know, Ethel, I may rely on you."

"Well, I won't say a word—I won't mention your name, since you so ordain it."

Two or three days passed. As I had been the good Samaritan, in female garb, who aided the wounded man in his distress, I was now the visiting Sister of Mercy, the ministering angel—whatever you are good enough to call me—who every day saw after his wants, and sent, sometimes soup, and sometimes jelly, to favour the recovery of which the doctor spoke so sanguinely.

I did not feel the romantic interest I ought perhaps to have felt in the object of my benevolence. I had no wish to see his face again. I was haunted by a recollection of him that was ghastly. I am not wanting

in courage, physical or moral. But I should have made a bad nurse, and a worse soldier; at the sight of blood I immediately grow faint, and a sense of indescribable disgust remains.

I sometimes think we women are perverse creatures. For us there is an occult interest about the guilty and audacious, if it be elevated by masculine courage and beauty, and surrounded by ever so little of mystery and romance. Shall I confess it? The image of that wicked Mr. Marston, notwithstanding all Laura's hard epithets, and the startling situation in which I had seen him last, haunted me often, and with something more of fascination than I liked to confess. Let there be energy, cleverness, beauty, and I believe a reckless sort of wickedness will not stand the least in the way of a foolish romance. I think I had energy; I know I was impetuous. Insipid or timid virtue would have had no chance with me.

I was going to the farm-house one day, I

forget how long after the occurrence which had established my interesting relations with Plas Ylwd. My mother had a large cheval-glass; it had not often reflected her pretty image; it was the only one in the house, the furniture of which was very much out of date. It had been removed to my room, and before it I now stood, in my hat and jacket, to make a last inspection before I started. What did I see before me? I have courage to speak my real impressions, for there is no one near to laugh at me. A girl of eighteen, above the middle height, slender, with large, dark, grey eyes and long lashes, not much colour, not pink and white, by any means, but a very clear-tinted and marble-smooth skin; lips of carmine-scarlet, and teeth very white; thick, dark brown hair; and a tendency, when talking or smiling, to dimple in cheek and chin. There was something, too, spirited and energetic in the face that I contemplated with so much satisfaction.

I remained this day a little longer before my glass than usual. Half an hour later, I stood at the heavy stone doorway of Plas Ylwd. It is one of the prettiest farm-houses in the world. Round the farm-yard stand very old hawthorn and lime trees, and the farm-house is a composite building, in which a wing of the old Tudor manor-house of Plas Ylwd is incorporated, under a common thatch, which has grown brown and discoloured, and sunk and risen into hillocks and hollows by time. The door is protected by a thatched porch, with worn stone pillars; and here I stood, and learned that "the gentleman upstairs" was very well that afternoon, and sitting up; the doctor thought he would be out for a walk in two or three days. Having learned this, and all the rest that it concerned Rebecca Torkill to hear, I took my leave of good Mrs. Prichard, and crossing the stile from the farm-yard, I entered the picturesque old

wood in which the inmate of Plas Ylwd had received his wound. Through this sylvan solitude I intended returning to Malory.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE OUTLAW.

AS I followed my path over the unequal flooring of the forest, among the crowded trunks of the trees and the thickets of brambles, I saw, on a sudden, Mr. Marston almost beside me. I was a good deal startled, and stood still. There was something in his air and looks, as he stood with his hat raised, so unspeakably deprecatory, that I felt at once re-assured. Without my permission it was plain he would not dream of accompanying me, or even of talking to me. All Laura's warnings and entreaties sounded at that moment in my ears like a far-off and unmeaning tinkle. He had no

apologies to make; and yet he looked like a penitent. I was embarrassed, but without the slightest fear of him. I spoke; but I don't recollect what I said.

"I have come here, Miss Ware, as I believe, at some risk; I should have done the same thing had the danger been a hundred times greater. I tried to persuade myself that I came for no other purpose than to learn how that foolish fellow, who would force a quarrel on me, is getting on. But I came, in truth, on no such errand; I came here on the almost desperate chance of meeting you, and in the hope, if I were so fortunate, that you would permit me to say a word in my defence. I am unfortunate in having two or three implacable enemies, and fate has perversely collected them here. Miss Grey stands in very confidential relations with you, Miss Ethel; her prejudices against me are cruel, violent, and in every way monstrous."

He was walking beside me as he said this.

"Mr. Marston," I interposed, "I can't hear you say a word against Miss Grey. I have the highest opinion of her; she is my very dearest friend—she is truth itself."

"One word you say I don't dispute, Miss Ware. She means all she says for truth; but she is cruelly prejudiced, and, without suspecting it, does me the most merciless injustice. Whenever she is at liberty to state her whole case against me—at present I haven't so much as heard it—I undertake to satisfy you of its utter unfairness. There is no human being to whom I would say all this, or before whom I would stoop to defend myself and sue for an acquittal, where I am blameless, but you, Miss Ware."

I felt myself blushing. I think that sign of emotion fired him.

"I could not tell," he said, extending his hand towards Plas Ylwd, "whether that foolish man was dead or living; and this was the last place on earth I should have come to, in common prudence, while that

was in doubt; but I was willing to brave that danger for a chance of seeing you once more—I could not live without seeing you."

He was gazing at me, with eyes glowing with admiration. I thought he looked wonderfully handsome. There was dash and recklessness, I thought, enough for an old-world outlaw, in his talk and looks, and, for all I knew, in his reckless doings; and the scene, the shadow, this solemn decaying forest, accorded well, in my romantic fancy, with the wild character I assigned him. There was something flattering in the devotion of this prompt and passionate man.

"Make me no answer," he continued—"no answer, I entreat. It would be mere madness to ask it now; you know nothing of me but, perhaps, the wildest slanders that prejudice ever believed, or hatred forged. From the moment I saw you, in the old garden at Malory, I loved you! Love at first sight! It was no such infatuation. It was the recalling of some happy dream. I had

forgotten it in my waking hours; but I recognised, with a pang and rapture, in you, the spirit that had enthralled me. I loved you long before I knew it. I can't escape. Ethel, I adore you!"

I don't know how I felt. I was pretty sure that I ought to have been very angry. And I was half angry with myself for not being angry. I was, however—which answered just as well—a little alarmed; I felt as a child does when about to enter a dark room, and I drew back at the threshold.

"Pray, Mr. Marston, don't speak so to me any longer. It is quite true, I do not know you; you have no right to talk to me in my walks—pray leave me now."

"I shall obey you, Miss Ware; whatever you command, I shall do. My last entreaty is that you will not condemn me unheard; and pray do not mention to my enemies the infatuation that has led me here, with the courage of despair—no, not quite despair, I won't say that. I shall never forget you.

Would to Heaven I could! I shall never forget or escape you; who can disenchant me? I shall never forget, or cease to pursue you, Ethel, I swear by Heaven!"

He looked in my face for a moment, raised my hand gently, but quickly, and pressed it to his lips, before I had recovered from my momentary tumult. I did not turn to look after him. I instinctively avoided that, but I heard his footsteps, in rapid retreat, in the direction of the farm-house which I had just left.

It was not until I had got more than half-way on my return to Malory that I began to think clearly on what had just occurred. What had I been dreaming of? I was shocked to think of it. Here was a total stranger admitted to something like the footing of a declared lover! What was I to do? What would papa or mamma say if my folly were to come to their ears? I did not even know where Mr. Marston was to be found. Some one has compared the

Iliad to a frieze, which ceases, but does not end; and precisely of the same kind was this awkward epic of the wood of Plas Ylwd. Who could say when the poet might please to continue his work? Who could say how I could now bring the epic to a peremptory termination?

I must confess, however, although I felt the embarrassment of the situation, this lawless man interested me. Like many whimsical young ladies, I did not quite know my own mind.

On the step of the stile that crosses the churchyard wall, near Malory, I sat down, in rather uncomfortable rumination. I was interrupted by the sound of a step upon the road, approaching from the direction of Malory. I looked up, and, greatly to my surprise, saw Mr. Carmel, quite close to me. I stood up, and walked a few steps to meet him; we shook hands, he smiling, very glad, I knew, to meet me.

"You did not expect to see me so soon

again, Miss Ware? And I have ever so much to tell you. I can't say whether it will please or vex you; but if you and Miss Grey will give me my old chair at your tea-table, I will look in for half an hour this evening. I have first to call at old Parry's, and give him a message that reached me from your mamma yesterday."

He smiled again, as he continued his walk, leaving me full of curiosity as to the purport of his news.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A JOURNEY.

BEHOLD us now, about an hour later, at our tea-table. Mr. Carmel, as he had promised, came in and talked, as usual, agreeably; but, if he had any particular news to tell us, he had not yet begun to communicate it.

"You found your old quarters awaiting your return. We have lost our interesting stranger," I said; "I wish you would tell us all you know about him."

Mr. Carmel's head sank; his eyes were fixed, in painful thought, upon the table. "No," he said, looking up sharply, "God

knows all, and that's enough. The story could edify no one."

He looked so pained, and even agitated, that I could not think of troubling him more.

"I have grown so attached to this place," said Mr. Carmel, rising and looking from the window, "that I can scarcely make up my mind to say good-bye, and turn my back on it for ever; yet I believe I must in a few days. I don't know. We soldiers, ecclesiastics, I mean, must obey orders, and I scarcely hope that mine will ever call me here again. I have news for you, also, Miss Ethel; I had a letter from your mamma, and a note from Mr. Ware, last night, and there is to be a break-up here, and a movement townward; you are to come out next season, Miss Ethel; your mamma and papa will be in town, for a week or so, in a few days; and, Miss Grey, she hopes you will not leave her on account of the change."

He paused; but she made no answer.

"Oh! darling Laura, you won't leave me?" I exclaimed.

"Certainly not, dear Ethel; and whenever the time for parting comes," she said very kindly, "it will cost me a greater pang than perhaps it will cost you. But though I am neither a soldier nor an ecclesiastic, my movements do not always depend upon myself."

Unrestrained by Mr. Carmel's presence, we kissed each other heartily.

"Here is a note, Miss Grey, enclosed for you," he murmured, and handed it to Laura.

In our eagerness we had got up and stood with Mr. Carmel in the recess of the window. It was twilight, and the table on which the candles burned stood at a considerable distance. To the light Laura Grey took her letter, and as she read it, quite absorbed, Mr. Carmel talked to me in low tones.

As he stood in the dim recess of the window, with trains of withered leaves rustling outside, and the shadow of the sear

and half-stript elms upon the court and window, he said, kindly and gently:

"And now, at last, Miss Ethel forsakes her old home, and takes leave of her humble friends, to go into the great world. I don't think she will forget them, and I am sure they won't forget her. We have had a great many pleasant evenings here, and in our conversations in these happy solitudes, the terrors and glories of eternal truth have broken slowly upon your eyes. Beware! If you trifle with Heaven's mercy, the world, or hell, or heaven itself, has no narcotic for the horrors of conscience. In the midst of pleasure and splendour, and the tawdry triumphs of vanity, the words of Saint Paul will startle your ears like thunder. It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance. The greater the privi-

lege, the greater the liability. The higher the knowledge, the profounder the danger. You have seen the truth afar off; rejoice, therefore, and tremble."

He drew back and joined Miss Grey.

I had been thinking but little, for many weeks, of our many conversations. Incipient convictions had paled in the absence of the sophist or the sage—I knew not which. When he talked on this theme, his voice became cold and stern; his gentleness seemed to me to partake of an awful apathy; he looked like a man who had witnessed a revelation full of horror; my fancy, I am sure, contributed something to the transformation; but it did overawe me. I never was so impressed as by him. The secret was not in his words. It was his peculiar earnestness. He spoke like an eye-witness, and seemed under unutterable fear himself. He had the preacher's master-gift of alarming.

When Mr. Carmel had taken his leave for

the night, I told Laura Grey my adventure in the wood of Plas Ylwd. I don't think I told it quite as frankly as I have just described it to you. The story made Miss Grey very grave for a time.

She broke the silence that followed by saying, "I am rather glad, Ethel, that we are leaving this. I think you will be better in town; I know I shall be more comfortable about you. You have no idea, and I earnestly hope you never may have, how much annoyance may arise from an acquaintance with that plausible, wicked man. He won't venture to force his acquaintance upon you in town. Here it is different, of course."

We sat up very late together, chatting this night in my room. I did not quite know how I felt about the impending change. My approaching journey to London was, to me, as great an event as her drive to the ball in her pumpkin-coach was to Cinderella. Of course there was some-

thing dazzling and delightful in the prospect. But the excitement and joy were like that of the happy bride who yet weeps because she is looking her last on the old homely life, that will always be dear and dearer as the irrevocable separation goes on. So, though she is sure she is passing into paradise, it is a final farewell to the beloved past. I felt the conflict; I loved Malory better than I could ever love a place again. But youth is the season of enterprise. God has ordained it. We go like the younger son in the parable, selfish, sanguine, adventurous; but the affections revive and turn homeward, and from a changed heart sometimes breaks on the solitude a cry, unheard by living ear, of yearning and grief, that would open the far-off doors, if that were possible, and return.

Next day arrangements took a definite form. All was fuss and preparation. I was to go the day following; Mr. Carmel was to take charge of me on the journey, and

place me safely in the hands of Mrs. Beauchamp, our town housekeeper. Laura Grey, having wound up and settled all things at Malory, was to follow to town in less than a week; and, at about the same time, mamma and papa were to arrive.

A drive of ten miles or so brought us to the station; then came a long journey by rail. London was not new to me; but London with my present anticipations was. I was in high spirits, and Mr. Carmel made a very agreeable companion, though I fancied he was a little out of spirits.

I was tired enough that night when I at length took leave of Mr. Carmel at the door of our house in —— Street. The street lamps were already lighted. Mrs. Beauchamp, in a black silk dress, received me with a great deal of quiet respect, and rustled up-stairs before me to show me my room. Her grave and regulated politeness contrasted chillily with the hearty, and sometimes even boisterous welcome of old Rebecca

Torkill. Mamma and papa were to be home, she told me, in a few days—she could not say exactly the day. I was, after an hour or so, a great deal lonelier than I had expected to be. I wrote a long letter to Laura, of whom I had taken leave only that morning (what a long time it seemed already!), and told her how much I already wished myself back again in Malory, and urged her to come sooner than she had planned her journey.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ARRIVALS.

LAURA had not waited any longer than I for a special justification of a letter. She had nothing to say, and she said it in a letter as long as my own, which reached me at breakfast next morning.

Sitting in a spacious room, looking out into a quiet fashionable street, in a house all of whose decorations and arrangements had an air of cold elegance and newness, the letter, with the friendly Cardyllion postmark on it, seemed to bring with it something of the clear air, the homely comfort, and free life of Malory, and made me yearn all the more for the kind faces, the old house, and

beloved scenery I had left behind. It was insufferably dull here, and I soon found myself in that state which is described as not knowing what to do with oneself. For two days no further letter from Laura reached me. On the third, I saw her well-known handwriting on the letter that awaited me on the breakfast-table. As I looked, as people will, at the direction before opening the envelope, I was struck by the postmark "Liverpool," and turning it over and over, I nowhere saw Cardyllion.

I began to grow too uncomfortable to wait longer; I opened the letter with misgivings. At the top of the note there was nothing written but the day of the week. It said:

"My Dearest Ethel,—A sudden and total change in my unhappy circumstances separates me from you. It is impossible that I should go to London now; and it is possible that I may not see you again for a

long time, if ever. I write to say farewell; and in doing so to solemnly repeat my warning against permitting the person who obtained a few days' shelter in the steward's house, after the shipwreck, to maintain even the slightest correspondence or acquaintance with you. Pray, dearest Ethel, trust me in this. I implore of you to follow my advice. You may hear from me soon again. In the meantime, I am sure you will be glad to know that your poor governess is happy—happier than she ever desired, or ever hoped to be. My fond love is always yours, and my thoughts are hourly with you.

"Ever your loving

"LAURA GREY.

"May God for ever bless you, darling! Good-bye."

I don't think I could easily exaggerate the effect of this letter. I will not weary you with that most tiresome of all relations, an account of another person's grief.

Mamma and papa arrived that evening. If I had lived less at Malory, and more with mamma, I should not, in some points, have appreciated her so highly. When I saw her, for the first time, after a short absence, I was always struck by her beauty and her elegance, and it seemed to me that she was taller than I recollected her. She was looking very well, and so young! I saw papa but for a moment. He went to his room immediately to dress, and then went off to his club. Mamma took me to her room, where we had tea. She said I had grown, and was very much pleased with my looks. Then she told me all her plans about me. I was to have masters, and I was not to come out till April.

She then got me to relate all the circumstances of Nelly's death, and cried a good deal. Then she had in her maid Lexley, and they held a council together over me on the subject of dress. My Malory wardrobe, from which I had brought up to town with

me what I considered an unexceptionable selection, was not laughed at, was not even discussed—it was simply treated as non-extant. In gave me a profound sense of the barbarism in which I had lived.

Laura Grey's letter lay heavy at my heart, but I had not yet mentioned it to mamma. There was no need, however, to screw my courage to that point. Among the letters brought up to her was one from Laura. When she read it she was angry in her querulous way. She threw herself into a chair in a pet. She had confidence in Laura Grey, and foresaw a good deal of trouble to herself in this desertion. "I am so particularly unfortunate!" she began—"everything that can possibly go wrong! everything that never happens to anyone else! I could have got her to take you to Monsieur Pontet's, and your drives, and to shop—and—she must be a most unprincipled person. She had no right to go away as she has done. It is too bad! Your papa

allows everyone of that kind to treat me exactly as they please, and really, when I am at home, my life is one continual misery! What am I to do now? I don't believe any one else was ever so entirely at the mercy of her servants. I don't know, my dear, how I can possibly do all that is to be done for you without assistance—and *there* was a person I thought I could depend upon. A total stranger I should not like, and really, for anything I can see at present, I think you must go back again to Malory, and do the best you can. I am not a strong person. I was not made for all this, and I really feel I could just go to my bed, and cry till morning."

My heart had been very full, and I was relieved by this opportunity of crying.

"I wonder at your crying about so good-for-nothing a person," exclaimed mamma, impatiently. "If she had cared the least about you, she could not have left you as she has done. A satisfactory person, cer-

tainly, that young lady has turned out!"

Notwithstanding all this, mamma got over her troubles, and engaged a dull and even-tempered lady, named Anna Maria Pounden, whose manners were quiet and unexceptionable, and whose years were about fifty. She was not much of a companion for me, you may suppose. She answered, however, very well for all purposes intended by mamma. She was lady-like and kind, and seemed made for keeping keys, arranging drawers, packing boxes, and taking care of people when they were ill. She spoke French, besides, fluently, and with a good accent, and mamma insisted that she and I should always talk in that language. All the more persistently for this change, my thoughts were with my beloved friend, Laura Grey.

From Malory, Rebecca Torkill told me, in a rather incoherent letter, the particulars of Laura Grey's departure from Malory. She had gone out for a walk, leaving her things half packed, for she was to go from Malory

next day. She did not return; but a note reached Mrs. Torkill, next morning, telling her simply that she could not return; and that she would write to mamma and to me in London the same day. Mrs. Torkill's note, like mine, had the Liverpool post-mark; and her conjecture was thus expressed: "I don't think, miss, she had no notions to leave that way when she went out. It must have bin something sudding. She went fest, I do sepose to olyhed, and thens to Liverpule in one of them pakkats. Mr. Williams, the town-clerk, and the vicar and his lady, and Doctor Mervyn, is all certing sure it could be no other wise."

Mamma did not often come down to breakfast, during her short stay at this unseasonable time of year in town. On one of those rare occasions, however, something took place that I must describe.

Mamma was in a pretty morning *negligé* as we used to call such careless dresses then, looking as delicately pretty as the old china

tea-cups before her. Papa was looking almost as perplexingly young as she, and I made up the little party to the number of the Graces. Mamma must have been forty, and I really don't think she looked more than two-and-thirty. Papa looked about five-and-thirty; and I think he must have been at least ten years older than he looked. That kind of life that is supposed to wear people out, seemed for them to have had an influence like the elixir vitæ; and I certainly have seen rustics, in the full enjoyment of mountain breezes, simple fare, and early hours, look many a day older than their years. The old rule, so harped upon, that "early to bed and early to rise" is the secret of perpetual youth, I don't dispute; but then, if it be early to go to bed at sunset in Winter, say four in the evening, and to rise at four in the morning, is it not still earlier to anticipate that hour, and go to bed at four in the morning, and get up at one in the afternoon? At all events. I know that

this mode of life seemed to agree with papa and mamma. I don't think, indeed, that either suffered much from the cares that poison enjoyment, and break down strength. Mamma threw all hers unexamined upon papa; who threw all his with equal nonchalance upon Mr. Norman, a kind of factotum, secretary, comptroller, diplomatist, financier, and every other thing that comes within the words "making oneself generally useful."

I never knew exactly what papa had a year to live upon. Mamma had money also. But they were utterly unfit to manage their own affairs, and I don't think they ever tried. Papa had his worries now and then; but they seldom seemed to last more than a day, or at most a week or two. There were a number of what he thought small sums, varying from two to five thousand pounds, which under old settlements dropped in opportunely, and extricated him. These sums ought to have been treated, not as

income, but as capital, as I heard a moneyed man of business say long ago ; but papa had not the talent of growing rich, or even of continuing rich, if a good fairy had gifted him with fortune.

Papa was in a reverie, leaning back in his chair ; mamma yawned over a letter she was reading ; I was drumming some dance music with my fingers on my knee under the table-cloth, when suddenly he said to mamma :

"You don't love your aunt Lorrimer very much ?"

"No, I don't love her—I never said I did, did I ?"

"No, but I mean, you don't like her, you don't care about her ?"

"No," said mamma, languidly, and looking wonderingly at him with her large pretty eyes. "I don't very much—I don't quite know—I have an affection for her."

"You don't love her, and you don't even

like her, but you have an affection for her," laughed papa.

"You are so teasing. I did not say that; what I mean is, she has a great many faults and oddities, and I don't like them—but I have an affection for her. Why should it seem so odd to you that one should care for one's relations? I do feel that for her, and there let it rest."

"Well, but it ought not to rest there—as you do like her."

"Why, dear—have you heard anything of her?"

"No; but there is one thing I should not object to hear about her just now."

"One thing? What do you mean, dear?"

"That she had died, and left us her money. I know what a brute I am, and how shocked you are; but I assure you we rather want it at this moment. You write to her, don't you?"

"N-not very often. Once since we saw her at Naples."

"Well, that certainly is not very often," he laughed. "But she writes to you. You thought she seemed rather to like us—I mean you?"

"Yes."

"She has no one else to care about that I know of. I don't pretend to care about her —I think her an old fool."

"She isn't that, dear," said mamma, quietly.

"I wish we knew where she is now. Seriously, you ought to write to her a little oftener, dear; I wish you would."

"I'll write to her, certainly, as soon as I am a little more myself. I could not do it just to-day; I have not been very well, you know."

"Oh! my darling, I did not mean to hurry you. Of course not, till you feel perfectly well; don't suppose I could be such a monster. But—I don't want, of course, to pursue her—but there is a middle course between that and having to drop her. She

really has no one else, poor old thing! to care about, or to care about her. Not that *I* care about her, but you're her kinswoman, and I don't see why——"

At this moment the door opened, and there entered, with the air of an assumed intimacy and a certain welcome, a person whom I little expected to see there. I saw him with a shock. It was the man with the fine eyes and great forehead, the energetic gait and narrow shoulders. The grim, mean-looking, intelligent, agreeable man of fifty, Mr. Droqville.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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